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ABSTRACT

Literacy across Cultures, the journal of the Foreign Language Literacy Special Interest Group, a special interest group formed within the Japan Association for Language Teaching, seeks to network people, ideas, theory, practice, and experiences that can help lead to a better understanding of foreign language literacy. This issue contains six articles and two book reviews. The articles include the following: "Automaticity Theory and EFL in Japan: With Some Specific Applications for Reading" (Fumiko Yoshimura); "Selection of Reading Texts: Moving beyond Content Schema" (Maya Khemlani David, Lynne Norazit); "Language Learning Strategies and Language Use Applied to Foreign Language Reading and Writing: A Simplified Menu Approach" (Anthony S. Rausch); "The Promise and Practice of Extensive Reading: An Interview with George Jacobs and Willy Renandya, SEAMEO Regional Language Center (RELC), Singapore" (Andy Barfield); "Expressive Writing Skills Enhanced through the Use of Poetry" (Prisca Molotsi); and "On-Line Newspapers as a Source of Language Teaching Material" (Paul Wringer, David Dycus). The issue also includes reviews of two books: "A History of Reading," reviewed by John Lindberg; and "Conversations of the Mind: The Uses of Journal Writing for Second Language Learners," reviewed by Michael Carroll. (Contains 2 tables, 2 figures, 19 suggested Web links, and 52 references.) (KFT)

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# Literacy Across Cultures

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Spring/Summer 2000 Volume 4, Number 1

## Automaticity Theory and EFL in Japan: With Some Specific Applications for Reading

## Selection of Reading Texts: Moving Beyond Content Schemata

## Language Learning Strategies Instruction and Language Use Applied to Foreign Language Reading and Writing: A Simplified "Menu" Approach

## The Promise and Practice of Extensive Reading

Ideas in Action

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Links to Literacy

It Is Written

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# Contents

**Literacy Across Cultures Vol. 4, No. 1**
**Spring/Summer 2000**

## Articles

2 **Automaticity Theory and EFL in Japan: With Some Specific Applications for Reading**
by Fumiko Yoshimura

11 **Selection of Reading Texts: Moving Beyond Content Schema**
by Maya Khemlani David & Lynne Norazit

18 **Language Learning Strategies Instruction and Language Use Applied to Foreign Language Reading and Writing: A Simplified "Menu" Approach**
by Anthony S. Rausch

## Interview

25 **The Promise and Practice of Extensive Reading: An Interview with George Jacobs and Willy Renandya, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (RELC), Singapore**
by Andy Barfield

## Ideas in Action

31 **Expressive Writing Skills Enhanced Through the Use of Poetry**
by Prisca Molotsi

## Links to Literacy

34 **On-line Newspapers as a Source for Language Teaching Material**
by Paul Wringer and David Dycus

## It Is Written...

37 ***A History of Reading***
Reviewed by John Lindberg

38 ***Conversations of the Mind: The Uses of Jounal Writing for Second Language Learners***
Reviewed by Michael Carroll

## Departments

39 News and Announcements
41 Submissions Information
42 Advertising in *LAC*
42 Subscription and Membership Information

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## Statement of Purpose

Literacy in one's first language (L1) has become essential for virtually anyone wishing to function in most of the modern world. At the same time, growing contact between the world's people has increased the need for foreign language learning and has highlighted the need for a greater understanding of the aspects, processes, development and implications of FL literacy (FLL). Literacy Across Cultures, published in association with the Foreign Language Literacy Special Interest Group (FLL SIG), a special interest group under the auspices of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), seeks to network people, ideas, theory, practice and experiences that can help lead to a better understanding of FLL. In doing so, we aim to move beyond idealized constructs of the L2 and FL learner, and to make clear the differences between L1, L2 and FL literacy practices, processes and theoretical models.

To do this, we seek to encourage locally relevant research into foreign language literacy in Japan and to map out commonalities and differences between features of foreign language literacy in Japan and in other countries. The FLL SIG also aims to foster and network study groups and local grassroots linkups with teachers in other countries in order to learn about their situations and needs, and to create greater understanding and mutual cooperation between teachers in different countries and situations.

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# Automaticity Theory and EFL in Japan
## With Some Specific Applications for Reading

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Currently the overall emphasis of much language instruction has been shifting from knowledge acquisition to that of communicative usage. One of the most typical dilemmas that EFL instructors in Japan (and elsewhere) face, however, is that even if we give our students a significant amount of time in the classroom to use English in communicative activities, they still do not acquire the proficiency levels we might expect to justify such activities. What might be missing in the process of our instruction and practice activities? In trying to answer this question, in this article, I will introduce the concept of Automaticity Theory (AT) and explain how we can apply the theory to the actual EFL curriculum. This application, I contend, can help to ensure that our language learners become able to coordinate individual skills in more complex tasks leading to independence in communicative ability.

## Automaticity Theory

Automaticity Theory (AT) attempts to explain how people acquire skills as a function of the automaticity of operating processes. Schneider and Fisk (1983) explain the mechanisms of skill acquisition in terms of contrasting automatic and controlled types of cognitive and memory processing:

> Automatic processing is a fast, parallel, fairly effortless process which is not limited by short-term memory capacity, is not under direct subject control and performs well-developed skilled behaviors. Automatic processing typically develops when subjects deal with the stimulus consistently over many trials....Controlled processing is characterized as a slow, generally serial, effortful, capacity limited, subject controlled processing mode that must be used to deal with novel or inconsistent information. (p.120)

Schneider and Fisk (1983) also show how practice changes controlled processing into automatic processing. According to them, automatic productions are modular and will develop when the component processes are consistent. This modular processing system can be hierarchical, with the same module being one part of many different skills. The assumption is that there is an upper limit to human attention span. Practice, however, can make automatic productions relatively free of limited memory resources; thus there is no necessary limit to the number of automatic processes which can be active at the same time. Moreover, practice makes productions autonomous, reducing direct conscious control of the subject. This is a crucial stage on which it can be said that good and poor learners divide. Automaticity which has been acquired through effective, repeated practice makes it possible to process different stimuli at different stages simultaneously, as in something like a psychological and pyscho-motor version of a complex production line. Schneider and Fisk (1983) illustrate this change of behavior in practicing a motor skill by describing the change in learning how to play the piano. At the novice level, performance is very slow, serial, and capacity limited. Controlled processing is in effect at this stage and the learner must allot much of

finite attention capacity to each motor task. After substantial practice, however, the learner builds up a vocabulary of playable notes by consistently repeating each note in a given phrase thousands of times. As the automatic productions develop, the performer can speed up the responses, incorporate more complicated rhythm information, and begin to have sufficient capacity freed up and made available to attend to the patterns of notes, familiar scales and chords, and then finally onto entire sections in the music. Figure 1 shows the continuum of automatization adapted from Whitaker (1983, p.199):

According to Whitaker (1983), the stages of behavior acquisition are best expressed as a continuum, not a dichotomy. Starting from the left end of this continuum, we gradually acquire the automaticity of a behavior with repeated practice. In learning a musical instrument, people start from the novel (or novice) stage; with sufficient practice and improvement, they acquire the skills necessary to play a piece of music beautifully and fluently.

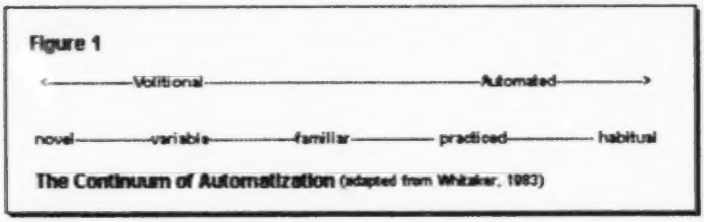


Figure 1
The Continuum of Automatization (adapted from Whitaker, 1983)

By way of comparison and contrast, Anderson (1995) perceives the development of skill acquisition as the development of problem-solving operators. He divides the processes into three stages; the cognitive stage, the associative stage, and the autonomous stage. He describes the general characteristics of each stage as follows: In the cognitive stage, learners commit to memory a set of facts relevant to the skill. Typically they rehearse these facts as they first perform the skill. The process is slow. The information they have learned amounts to a set of problem-solving operators for the skill. In the associative stage, the connections among the various elements required for successful performance are strengthened. Errors are detected and eliminated as well. Learners, by this time, have converted the verbal knowledge once memorized into procedural knowledge. In the autonomous stage, the procedure becomes more skilled, more automated, and more rapid. In becoming so, it requires fewer and fewer attentional resources. Learners also develop more complex skills in the direction of becoming more automated and requiring fewer processing resources. Anderson says, "it is the procedural, not the declarative, knowledge that governs the skilled performance" (p.274).

## Applying AT to a FL Curriculum

The models of skill acquisition described above show how people develop automaticity with practice, and they break down a complex process over time into understandable stages. In learning a foreign language, just as with other skill acquisition processes, we must start from an absolute beginning stage at which we have no language and must progress over time until we have acquired language proficiency. Ultimately, we hope to attain the stage where we can exert control over language well enough to allocate our attention to understanding and responding to the content of the messages — to actual communication. In real mainstream classroom instruction, however, it is hard to see how the process of acquiring functional proficiency levels over stages is actually acknowledged and dealt with. In terms of input and what is the object of study, discourse is typically broken down into smaller, discrete items for analysis and manipulation. The items are typically grammar points, key vocabulary, typical expressions, and the language associated with communicative situations and functions, etc. For each isolated item, explanation and opportunities for practice activities are often given.

Instructors assume that it is the learners' responsibility to practice what has been covered in class until they have acquired the target proficiency. On the other hand, many learners seem to think they have practiced enough after only a few times, even if the learners remain well short of being fluent and proficient in the objective of study. Keeping in mind what instructors and

learners think about the matter, if we compare it to the Schneider and Fisk (1983) model, we can see that these learners typically stay at the faltering, controlled processing stage. In terms of the Anderson (1995) model, it might be said that in much instruction the associative stage is neglected; but it is at this stage where learners come to coordinate many individual elements as a bridge to the autonomy stage. Too many of our language learners never develop skills to the point where they can perform more integrative and complex tasks of language use, communication, and literacy.

They need to free up their cognitive and memory resources by becoming fluent, automatic, and efficient at certain elements of processing in order to devote their mental resources to more involved, complex tasks of real communication and interaction. In short, they need to stick it out with some practice tasks until stages of automaticity have been reached. After practicing distinct skills until a fluency with them has been reached, learners then need to practice them in more integrative, less framed tasks. In so doing, they will also learn how to balance their attention span; their cognitive and memory resources can be more efficiently shared out to the various integrated parts of increasingly complex tasks. Taking this into consideration, we need to restructure the whole curriculum to incorporate language training adapted to the associative stage of Anderson's (1995) model. Figure 2 demonstrates a model which could be applied to the structuring of the formal language curriculum around the concepts of AT.

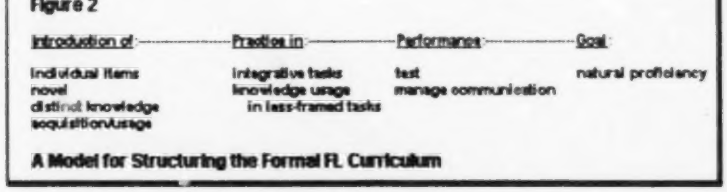
In creating a curriculum, first the goals of our instruction need to be defined. This means that we need to define the characteristics of true communication which is at the autonomous stage of language acquisition. Secondly, what is involved in a true communicative situation needs to be analyzed and broken into distinct elements so that teachers can incorporate them into their syllabus. Each element should be taught so that learners can understand it and have opportunities to practice it until they can use it without allotting too much conscious effort. Employing communicative games and activities are good because they are fun and create situations where meaning is negotiated and exchanged.

The true challenge for language instructors, however, is how to orchestrate the needs at different levels and come up with a curriculum which helps learners to develop automaticity gradually and systematically. This includes filling the discrepancy between the overall goal of a language course and the goals of individual lessons. In developing a motor skill such as driving or playing sports, the most emphasized stage is not during but after individual items or activities are practiced. After learning basic skills, practice is given for larger units composed of the smaller isolated skills already learned. The units of practice get larger and larger until learners attain the goal of proficiency. In language learning, incorporating integrative tasks is important because it gives learners opportunities to use distinct skills in less framed, more complex tasks. Making explicit clear goals is important as well in order to motivate learners to practice the same underlying skills over and over.

## Rationale for Applying AT to EFL Instruction in Japan

AT is particularly applicable to EFL instruction in Japan and elsewhere because of the following two reasons: (1) the age of the language learners and (2) the lack of input and incidental learning in the total FL learning environment. It is plausible to say that many L1 development and cognition researchers (e.g. Fodor, 1985; Jackendoff, 1996) contend that there is a special faculty for language acquisition, and therefore language acquisition should be treated as something significantly if not totally different from other skills acquisition. But it is questionable if the contention is applicable to FL learning, which often only starts to take place after puberty. One explan-

Figure 2




A Model for Structuring the Formal FL Curriculum





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ation of this is that the Critical Period Hypothesis suggests that there is a time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning. Developmental change in the brain, it is argued, changes the nature of second language acquisition. According to this view, language learning which occurs after the end of the critical period may not be based on the innate structures believed to contribute to first language or second language acquisition in early childhood. Rather, older learners depend on more general learning abilities — the same ones they might use to learn other kinds of skills or information (Lightbown and Spada, 1997, p.42).

However, the development of such general skills is often described, accounted for and explained in terms of AT (e.g. Bloom, 1986; Schneider and Fisk, 1983; Anderson, 1995). Many elements of literacy in a language, too, also can be said to be a general type of learning, though language development obviously interacts and limits it.

Compared with many L2 learners in SL situations, FL learners are even more disadvantaged in terms of an environment to reinforce FL learning, with both input and output often being limited to formal classroom settings. L2 (such as ESL) and FL (such as EFL) learners are often categorized into the same group. However, they represent two distinct groups, as Swaffer and Bacon (1993) point out, "L2 learners operate in the culture of the language they are learning and can access input outside the classroom with relative ease, whereas FL students cannot" (p.125). Thus, it is very difficult to expect and wrong to assume that incidental learning will automatically occur in the FL setting. To achieve a target proficiency in FL learning, a systematic and efficient learning environment should be created intentionally in the language classrooms. AT can suggest ways for teachers to achieve such an environment. Therefore, from the combined perspectives of the learners' age and the learning environment, the application of automaticity theory is justified in EFL instruction in environments such as Japan.

## Applying AT to EFL Reading Instruction in Japan: An Analysis of the Situation

Using many of the insights gained from actual application of AT to a JSL program at the university level in the US (see Yoshimura, 1999), I would like to address here the theory's possible use for EFL reading in Japan. Concentrating on EFL reading is particularly relevant here because written texts are often the major source of input for students living in a country where the target language is neither a significant native nor second one. The failure of developing learners' reading proficiencies in most Japanese EFL classes can be attributed to the lack of emphasis on the training at what has been called the associative stage. In this section, what is involved in EFL reading will be analyzed and skills which require systematic training toward automaticity will be pointed out. Then, the following section demonstrates how we can apply automaticity theory to the actual EFL reading instruction and evaluation in Japan.

According to Bernhardt (1996), in L2 reading both text-driven operations (e.g. word recognition, phonemic/graphemic decoding, and syntactic feature recognition) and knowledge-driven operations (e.g. intratextual perception, metacognition, and prior knowledge) work simultaneously with varying degrees of success. Bernhardt cites Johnston's (1983) comments on the risks involved in this simultaneous operation: "The qualitative mismatch between text and reader may pose a far more insidious problem — quite subtly causing the reader to build a completely inappropriate model of the text meaning without becoming aware of the problem. It is not that inferences would not be made, but that inappropriate ones would be made" (p.31). And the success of creating an appropriate model of text meaning in L2 and FL reading depends on the accuracy and efficiency of text-driven operations, which are subskills for L2 and FL reading comprehension.

Researchers agree that reading skills can be automated with repeated practice (e.g. Schneider and Fisk, 1983; Bloom, 1986; Samuels and Flor, 1997). However, as Samuels and Flor (1997) warn, not all skills or knowledge bases can be so automatized. According to them, "In general, tasks with a high degree of regularity and sameness, such as word recognition, learning to use a typewriter, or memorizing multiplication tables, can be automatized, whereas tasks that

are constantly changing, such as text comprehension, continue to require attention and effort" (p.112).

Therefore, to talk about automaticity in L2 or FL reading, we need to divide elements involved in the reading act into what can be automated and what cannot. Knowledge-driven operations such as intratextual perception, metacognition, and prior knowledge may work mainly as individual differences in learners' general reading skills developed in their L1. More importantly, these operations cannot be automated because they are constantly changing depending on the context and continue to require attention and effort. However, automaticity in text-driven skills may well free up memory and cognition for the type of fluent reading that requires constant attention and effort, and breakdowns in such skills can prove to be the "weakest link" in the entire reading process.

What can be automatized are tasks such as word recognition, phonemic/graphemic decoding, and syntactic feature recognition. These "tasks with a high degree of regularity and sameness" are the very tasks in which systematic training should be given to learners. What task should be central in a particular reading instruction depends on the reader's proficiency level. Bernhardt (1996) illustrates the distribution of reading errors which appear along with second language literacy development (p.169). According to the illustration, word recognition errors and the phonemic/graphemic confusions appear in early stages of proficiency. Syntactic errors have a normal-curve shape in account of their development: they develop as a function of greater exposure and growth in the language and then decline gradually. Two of the higher order aspects of reading, background knowledge usage and intratextual perceptions, are described by exponential curves, indicating that a reader begins to rely more on the language and less on what he/she thinks the language contains as his/her proficiency develops. As a reader's proficiency develops, the central errors and the most important reading factors change as well. Therefore, the focus of each period of instruction should be modified depending on the learner's proficiency.

## Taking into Account Language Background Differences

On top of the factors which influence general L2 and FL reading, language-specific factors need to be examined. The following is a brief comparison and contrast of the linguistic features and differences across Japanese (L1) and English (FL).

These two unrelated languages differ considerably in various aspects. While written Japanese mainly uses a combination of hiragana, katakana (both syllabic symbols), and kanji (symbols which represent Japanese at the morpheme and word-level of meaning), written English utilizes a roman alphabet of 26 letters. While the basic Japanese sentence structure is SOV with postpositions signalling many of the grammatical relationships, the predominant English word order is SVO with particles functioning as prepositions. While the Japanese language largely depends on its post-positional particles to indicate the parts of speech, English depends much on the word order for the same function. Because particles are largely responsible for indicating the relations among words in Japanese, Japanese word order is relatively more flexible. On the other hand, because English mainly relies on word order to indicate the intended relations among words, the overall sentence structures are more regular. However, mature, written English is characterized by some complexity in embedding and subordination.

All English sentences can be categorized into the following five types: SV, SVC, SVO, SVOO, SVOC. There is only one predicate verb (V) in each sentence except in a compound sentence. If we can find the predicate verb in each sentence, we can find the subject (S), which is always placed before the verb, and the object (O) or the complement (C), which is always placed after the verb. The parts of speech can be expressed in a word, a phrase, or a clause. Because of this regularity, internalizing English word order could be automated with repeated practice. Systematic practice should be given to Japanese EFL learners, whose L1 utilizes totally different ways of signaling the intended relations among words. Synthesizing all the above, systematic training should be given to text-driven operations such as word recognition, phonemic/graphemic decoding, and syntactic feature recognition. The selection of the central skills in each class should be made in light of the learners' reading proficiencies and the learning contexts, including the linguistic differences between the L1 and the target language.

## Recommendations for Actual EFL Reading Instruction

In this section, a curriculum to develop learners' EFL reading proficiencies will be recommended with the above analysis in mind. To avoid inappropriate knowledge-driven operations, text-driven operations should be practiced repeatedly until students gain automaticity. At the initial stage, the focus of practice should be smaller units such as a letter or a word. Learners should be given enough training to recognize English letters and words. Because the number of letters in an alphabet is limited, each encounter with words may give the learners practice in letter recognition. To enhance word recognition, on the other hand, conscious efforts should be made on the part of instructors to make this aspect a part of regular vocabulary instruction. Many L2 learners may complain that memorizing words are boring and that they will soon forget words even though they memorize them once. Recycling the same words learned before in numerous different contexts may reduce their study load and will also help them recognize words in future reading encounters.

After the initial stage, the most important task may be to help students internalize and schematize the most typical English sentence structures and to use them to analyze the intended relations among words. Though the unit of processing may expand into a paragraph or the whole text later on, at or below the intermediate level where most Japanese EFL learners belong, understanding the meanings of each sentence will remain important. In order to internalize the basic English structures, instructors may want to provide explicit explanation of the typical English sentence structures and give enough training in using them to read English texts. The material should be short and simple using typical structures. Gradually the material may become difficult and complicated with the addition of more grammatical elements and the combination of various structures.

In each stage of proficiency, the learners should be given sufficient training to reach a stage where they can read the material rapidly and accurately. The content of the material should be easy and concrete at first, gradually becoming more difficult and abstract. In general, reading material that uses typical, mature written English may contain more complicated sentence structures when compared with spoken material. Exposing students with graded, spoken materials in the early stage may give them opportunities to listen to texts with the basic sentence structures and help them to internalize and schematize the basic English sentence structures. Though the ultimate goal of most FL reading practices may be to comprehend the text, syntactic feature recognition should be emphasized particularly to the L2 or FL readers whose native language structures are very different from those of the target language. Otherwise, learners may depend too much on their background knowledge and so not pay enough attention to what is actually written in a text.

This over-dependence on top-down comprehension—though natural enough— may lead them to run the risk of creating inappropriate models of text meanings. Instructors can ask learners to find the subject and the predicate verb of each sentence which appear regularly. For example, instructors can keep asking learners "Who?" and "Did what?" in reading sentences. Because what follows each verb can be predicted from the nature of the verb, the questions can be created on the spot, if necessary. Soon the learners will internalize the questions and use them to analyze encountered sentences. Even if they encounter complex sentences, they can keep using the same questions to analyze the sentence structures and also to find which chunk of words serves what part of speech. Though this kind of practice may seem boring, enough emphasis and practice should be given to learners until they have acquired the sort of automaticity that frees up the working memory required to read mature prose fluently.

## The Value of Evaluation

Evaluation is another factor which plays a crucial role in ensuring that learners have internalized the important subskills for L2 and FL reading comprehension. Therefore, evaluation needs to incorporate the concept of automaticity as well. Most reading tests measure the learners' comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of most standard reading practice. The assumption is that if learners can answer the questions asking their text comprehension, they can use in a coordinated

manner the sets of subskills necessary for text comprehension. However, this assumption does not always hold true. Poor L2 or FL learners may construct and continually depend on their incomplete and possibly erroneous background knowledge and create inappropriate models of text meanings. Even worse, they may not be aware of their problems. Evaluation should play a role of diagnosing the caus of the learners' mistakes and provide feedback to the learners. This is the reason the usage of these subskills in reading should be measured separately. The following paragraphs demonstrate how to measure these subskills.

## Word Recognition Automaticity

Samuels and Flor (1997) suggest a way of assessing automatic performance in word recognition. According to their suggestion, readers can be asked to perform two tasks. First, they could be asked to listen to the instructor reading a passage and later they would be asked to tell everything they remember about the passage. Second, they could be asked to read a passage out loud and later they would be asked to tell everything they remember about the passage. For students who have attained automatic word recognition for reading, the listening and oral reading scores should be comparable. For students who are not automatic, the listening score should be better because the oral reading test demands a level of simultaneous visual decoding and comprehension not yet attained (pp. 113-114). The proper way to apply such a method to EFL students still needs to be explored and worked into a recommended procedure. Students who are automatic at visual decoding of words can generally auditorally attend to the oral texts with accuracy, speed, and expression, and do so with good comprehension. However, there would seem to be possible complications with direct application to EFL students. For example, the reading task would have to be strictly timed so as not to make it any easier than the listening task; in other words the time requirements of the reading task would have to duplicate the real time limitations of real listening.

Practicing word recognition is a task that clearly belongs within the context of direct instruction in the EFL reading classroom, where the teacher has to focus on both reading and language development and practice. It is beyond the scope of this paper to cover in details tasks for practicing word recognition for automaticity, but it should be pointed out and emphasized that real reading tasks at linguistic levels appropriate to the learner might ultimately prove the single best way to develop word recognition skills. However, those instructors wishing to isolate the practice for some types of limited practice, there are exercises that can be constructed for this purpose (see Paran, 1996).

## Automaticity in Syntactic Feature Recognition

To measure automatic performance in syntactic feature recognition in reading, how well learners can apply the internalized English structures to actual reading processes should be measured "on line" with real reading tasks. The following is a way of measuring the online syntactic feature recognition. Ask the learners to draw lines between meaningful chunks of words and to underline the predicate verb in each sentence while they read a text. This does not considerably alter the actual reading processes in use, but it does help make them more apparent to the instructor. Teachers can then confirm whether or not the learners draw lines at the appropriate divisions and if the predicate verbs are the correct ones. According to automaticity theory, practice "improves the chunking of information about the outputs, goal states, and inputs of the situation" (Schneider and Fisk, 1983, p. 122). In addition, teachers must try to use multiple measures of comprehension accuracy and reading speed as students engage real texts — accuracy in understanding and reading speed are important characteristics of automatic performance. It is not possible to have reading proficiency without automaticity; automaticity of certain features — word and syntactic recognition — are necessary (but not sufficient) to reading for meaning. Thus, in applying automaticity theory into the actual Japanese EFL reading instruction, much emphasis should be placed on the repeated practice of text-driven operations and the online evaluation.

Another technique and activity that would seem to have both usefulness as a procedure for assessment as well as practice is actually one that

has been around for a while. This is called "read and look up" (West, 1960, in Bruder and Henderson, 1986). As Bruder and Henderson (1986) explain it, it is a technique where "the student looks at a sentence or part of a passage, says it silently, looks up from the page and says the sentence aloud. Unless the student understands the grammatical structure and the message of the sentence, it is impossible to remember the string long enough to repeat it back. We frequently use the technique at beginning and intermediate levels to check comprehension and short-term memory (p. 36)." The "read and look up" tasks does not deviate too much from what normal reading is, and so should prove useful in assessing what learners can do. While this is not a new technique, it is easy to see that it fits with many recent assertions about language learning and processing: students read a phrase, clause or sentence to themselves (and teachers might prepare a text with the chunks marked for students learning the procedure) — a CHUNK of meaning — and then look up from the text and say that chunk out loud. If the can do this with some fluency, then chances are they understand what they are reading. If they cannot put the chunks into working memory and repeat out loud what they are holding in immediate memory, then the language — the words, the structure — is too difficult. That is, even if somewhat known from previous study, there is insufficient automaticity in recognition of lexical and syntactical features for fluent reading. This is also an effective way to monitor comprehension without resorting to cross-linguistic translation.

Another way of measuring the online syntactic feature recognition is as follows: Ask the learners to draw lines between meaningful chunks of words and to underline the predicate verb in each sentence as they read a text. Teachers can then verify if the learners draw lines at the appropriate divisions and if the predicate verbs are the right ones. According to AT, "Practice improves chunking of information about the outputs, goal states, and inputs of the situation" (Schneider and Fisk, p. 122). In addition, teachers who do direct reading instruction need to measure comprehension accuracy along with reading speed when students read texts, which are the other characteristics of automatic performance. To measure all these aspects is important to get an accurate picture of the learners' reading proficiencies.

## Conclusion

Automaticity theory (AT) and how to apply it to a FL curriculum have been introduced. AT is justified as an application to the Japanese EFL instruction because of the learners' age and the learning environment. A curriculum to develop the Japanese EFL learners' reading proficiencies has been recommended using the concepts and framework of AT. This general theory of learning emphasizes the importance of training at the associative stage, where learners come to coordinate individual skills in more varied, complex tasks which display automaticity and fewer breakdowns in mental processing and overloads of working memory. How to realize automaticity theory in actual classroom instruction is still in its tentative, exploratory stages and more research and insights from reflective practice need to be accumulated and shared with the rest of the field.

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*YOSHIMURA, Cont'd on p. 24*

# Selection of Reading Texts: Moving Beyond Content Schema

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Since the late 1960s, a number of theorists (i.e. Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1978) have developed interactive theories of reading which place great importance on the role of the reader and the knowledge s/he brings to bear on the text in the reading process. These interactive theories, which now dominate reading research and strongly influence teaching practice, draw heavily on schema theory.

Schema theory proposes that readers possess different conceptual frameworks, called schemata, which they bring to the reading of a text and which they use to make sense of what they read. Such schemata are used by readers in interactive bottom-up and top-down processing. Schemata provide a framework for readers to check their understanding of the text, fill in information gaps within the text, and clarify ambiguities (Steffenson & Joag-Dev, 1984). Efficient readers use prior knowledge of content and textual features stored in schemata to make meaning out of the text (Rumelhart, 1977; Goodman, 1984).

Two types of schemata most often discussed in reading research are formal schemata and content schemata. Formal schemata are higher order structures containing knowledge of rhetorical organization structures, including knowledge of the general properties of text types and differences in genre (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988). The other type of schema which a reader brings to a text is content schema, the knowledge relative to the content domain of the text. Content schemata themselves can be classified into different types. One which has attracted growing interest is the culture-specific content schema (Carrell, 1988; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988). Several studies of second-language speakers and reading comprehension indicate that prior cultural experiences are extremely important in comprehending text (Anderson, 1979; Johnson, 1982; Steffenson & Joag-Dev, 1984). In fact, Brown et al. (1977) and Pearson and Gordon (1979) argue that students with greater prior knowledge comprehend and remember more.

A now famous study by Steffenson and Joag-Dev (1984), based on schema theory, demonstrates the effect of cultural background on reading comprehension. In the study, subjects from Indian and American backgrounds were asked to read and recall two texts describing an Indian and American wedding respectively. The texts were presented in the form of letters, a common genre familiar to the students, and were similar in terms of structural complexity (i.e. length and syntax). It was predicted that subjects would :

1) recall more of the native than the foreign text,
2) produce more expansions as a result of "remembering" items which were not mentioned in the text but were culturally appropriate and consistent with it, and
3) make more distortions of the foreign text.

The types of errors made by the subjects with the foreign texts confirmed the researchers' three predictions and suggested that the subjects made these errors because they were unable to call on relevant cultural content schemata to check their understanding of the text. The writers concluded that an important part of reading comprehension is cultural knowledge — readers will understand a text better if they share the content schema assumed by the writer but will distort the text if there is no shared schema. They note that interference occurs at all levels — affective, denotative and

propositional.

Steffensen and Joag-Dev point out that the findings illustrate the importance in the reading classroom of the careful screening of texts. They suggest that to facilitate a reader's comprehension of a text the teacher must first identify sources of interference, then contrast this with what is already known and finally provide enough context for the reader to understand what still remains unfamiliar.

## Teaching Dilemma

Findings such as these, while useful, present reading teachers with a paradox. If cultural unknowns are a sure source of misunderstanding in the reading classroom, then it can be argued that only texts that deal with known aspects of culture should be used in the reading classroom. Malaysian researchers Osman (1984) and Koh (1985), for example, have emphasised the importance of selecting texts that are within known world/cultural knowledge. However, one of the benefits of reading is to open new worlds and new cultures to readers. If teachers constantly select texts that are within the known schemata of students merely to facilitate students' reading process, teachers are not doing them justice. Although such selective choice of texts may facilitate the reading process, it does in no way open up new worlds and new experiences to them.

Real world needs underlie these theoretical and pedagogical issues. In a multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious country like Malaysia it is vital that people learn about each other's culture. This is true for members of the Islamic cultural majority as well as the minority cultures, and one should not assume that by living together in the same country that people have gained sufficient cultural knowledge about each other. Although it could be expected that the minority non-Muslim student in Malaysia has the schema to access a text on the Islamic world, this may not always be the case. For example, a number of Chinese and Indian students attend primary vernacular schools where the medium of instruction is Mandarin and Tamil respectively, and where the vast majority of the student population are also ethnically Chinese and Tamil. Thus, there may not be many opportunities for them to interact with their Malay-Muslim counterparts. This may also be compounded by their living in an area where the residents are predominantly non-Muslim. For minority and majority students alike, their first meaningful interaction might only occur when they proceed to secondary or tertiary level education. Knowledge of each group's world view facilitates understanding, which in turn can result in more conducive relationships and communication between peoples of different cultures and religions. Challenging stereotypical generalizations that make "others" appear more "other" can be aided through reading — reading about cultural unknowns.

## An Approach to Selecting a Text

Once a teacher accepts that using literature as a means of teaching culture is beneficial, the question remains of choosing appropriate texts and teaching techniques. We propose that while text selection can be difficult, it can be made easier if certain aspects of the texts and their readers are taken into account. We will discuss these criteria as well as strategies and techniques which can be used once a text is selected to help students get a fuller understanding of the text they read.

Burmeister (1987, p. 31) notes that "there is a definite interaction between factors found in written materials and factors found within the person who is reading." He suggests that apart from familiarity with content, knowledge of text construction, and possession of reading skills, there are certain features of a text and of the person reading it which facilitate understanding. These include: (a) paragraph organization, (b) word choice and sentence structure, (c) interest in the text, (d) presentation of the text (e.g. quality of illustrations, size of print etc.), and (e) motivation for reading the text.

Understanding the overall organisation of the text can also facilitate students' comprehension of a text on an unfamiliar topic. Urquhart (1992, p. 161-186) has investigated two types of text organization — organization according to time order and organization according to space order. His findings suggest that texts that conform to rhetorical organization patterns such as temporal and spatial order and cause and effect are easier for readers to recall and thus have a higher degree of readability. In short, structural features provide a scaffolding that can help readers to gain access to texts on unfamiliar topics, while interest and motivation can keep them on task.

Using an approach combining Urqhardt's findings on text organization and readability, Burmeister's criteria to guide text selection, and the additional factor of genre and readability, we will

show by using a sample text how a suitable text dealing with a subject not well understood or perhaps completely unknown to the target reader can be selected. Also, we will discuss specific pre-teaching activities to provide/develop cultural background information so students can be prepared to read it with understanding.

The sample text and the pre-teaching activities for it were chosen to specifically familiarize Chinese minority students with aspects of the world view of the Islamic majority, but this is not to imply that learning about other cultures is something only minority learners must do. It must work both ways, and the approach and techniques discussed can be applied to any text, including one to teach, for example, Islamic students about the culture of any of Malaysia's minorities.

The text chosen to demonstrate this is Abu-Lughod's (1993) *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*, an anthropological study of the Bedouin community in Egypt presented through the rhetorical style of spoken narrative. Specifically, it will be used to exemplify how Muslim attitudes to a topic of current interest in the non-Muslim world, polygyny, can be made accessible to the non-Muslim reader. The topic of polygyny is selected as many in the non-Islamic world tend to have a negative view of such an institution. Opening the Islamic world view to non-Muslim readers will enable them to learn that it is an institution that "does not necessarily bring the pleasure for husbands that Western and non-Muslim fantasies about harems suggest" because there is discord even within the Islamic world as "some turn to the Qu'ran to justify polygyny as Islamic, while others use the same passage to condemn the practice as not favored by God" (Abu-Lughod, 1993, p.19).

Despite the geographic distance between Malaysia and the Middle East, this text about Bedouin women has been selected to open new worlds to Malaysian Chinese and Indian students as Muslims, regardless of where they live, practice common basic principles of the Islamic faith.

## Synopsis of the Sample Text

The text selected for discussion is taken from the chapter on polygyny (Chapter 2) and is titled "Cousins". The chapter was chosen because it deals with three of the main issues central to Bedouin women's lives — polygyny, cousin marriage and child marriage — which may cause problems for readers unfamiliar with Bedouin or Islamic culture.

Briefly, in this passage Sagr and Gateefa, two of the writer's main informants, are talking to the writer about the early days of their marriage. Sagr explains how he came to marry Gateefa, and subsequently, his other two wives. Gateefa, who is 15 years younger than her husband and also his first cousin (their fathers were brothers), was promised to him at birth by her father. However, her father died when Gateefa was still very young and her mother took her back to live with her own relatives. Contact between the families was still maintained but to Sagr, Gateefa remained a small, albeit affectionate, child. After several attempts to marry other women were unsuccessful (they were claimed by their own cousins), Sagr's own relatives strongly advised him to marry Gateefa, arguing that if he did not, she would go to strangers. Although Sagr maintained that Gateefa was too young for marriage, he finally gave in to his relatives' arguments.

Ironically, on the wedding day itself, the brothers of a woman for whom he had already paid the bride price, but who had then been claimed by one of her cousins, Saffiya, came to say that their kinsman had now released her, and that the marriage could take place after all. Sagr accepted their proposal, promising to come for Saffiya in a few weeks. (Gateefa was little more than a child at the time and the marriage was not to be consummated until some time later.) Later, after Gateefa had produced several daughters, Sagr took a third wife, Azza, the reason being that he wanted sons. But he also justified his action by saying that "It's not just me — everyone has two or three wives." (95). Yet, as Gateefa points out, Azza has also only given him daughters, and has been a source of strife within the family. Sagr is now separated from Saffiya, although he maintains contact with her, but Azza still remains. However, it is Gateefa who, in Sagr's words, is "the mistress of my house, she's the one with the last word, her requests are the ones honored" (94).

## Factors in Selecting a Text

### *Text Organization*

The text selected is a narrative. Abu-Lughod says of her book, "It is made up of conversations, narratives, arguments, songs, reminiscences ...that these (Bedouin) women shared with each other..." (Abu-Lughod, 1993, p.6-7). As Urquhart has

pointed out, texts which follow temporal order, of which narratives are a common example, are easier to read, so by selective use of writing genres such as autobiographies, ethnographic studies or oral histories, reading can be facilitated. As a genre, narratives are the most familiar and possibly the most engaging for readers, and life stories make for interesting reading. Because narratives are commonly encountered in any language, readers' formal schema for this genre should be adequately developed.

The sample text, with a few exceptions, closely follows a strictly temporal order. Thus, in terms of text organization, the sample text would be expected to have a high level of readability, which in turn should help maintain interest in reading it.

***The Effect of Structural Features on Interest***

Interest is important in reading but is difficult to assess beforehand. What the teacher finds interesting may not interest the student and vice versa. However, one researcher, Flesch, maintains that the interest level of a text can be partially assessed in terms of its structural features. He suggests that the number of personal words (e.g. pronouns and people's names) and personal sentences (spoken sentences, etc.) within a text contribute to its interest level (Flesch, cited in Burmeister 1978, p.38).

The sample text is a good example of a text with a high interest level according to Flesch's criteria, as it contains a large number of personal pronouns and people's names, and it also consists of large chunks of conversation (i.e. personal sentences), being a record of the conversations which the researcher had with her informants.

***Readability***

It is generally assumed that the shorter the sentence, the simpler it is to decode. Similarly, word difficulty is usually determined by word length (in terms of number of syllables) and ,again, shorter words are regarded as being simpler. Over the years various readability formulae have been developed based on these two parameters, for example Rudolph Flesch's "Reading Ease" Formula (see Burmeister, 1978, p. 34) and Edward Fry's "Graph for Estimating Readability — Extended" (p. 35). Another readability formula which is based on the same parameters and is very simple to use is the Fog Index, referred to in Alderson and Urquhart (1992, xxii). The formula is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{No. of words}}{\text{No. of sentences}} + \frac{\text{No. of 3 syllable words} \times 100}{\text{No. of words}} \times 0.4$$

A score of 12 indicates that the text is "easy" (for someone who has achieved an undergraduate level of reading ability), 13-16 undergraduate level, and 16+ postgraduate level. This formula is particularly suitable for the analysis of the sample text as it measures difficulty in terms of suitability for tertiary students and within the context of reading in L2. The figure of 12.7 resulting from calculation of the Fog Index for the sample text indicates that it is structurally "easy" for undergraduate readers. If proper names with three syllables are included, the resulting level of difficulty is slightly higher – 13.27 – which means that the text falls into the "undergraduate" category.

Although readability formulae are useful, they can be time consuming to do, and those who do not wish to assess a text using a readability formula may instead wish to use a cloze test based on a small section of the text to get a determination of the text's readability. Even before calculating a readability score or giving a cloze test, a text can be subjected to a general analysis of vocabulary and sentence level variables that can give the teacher an idea of how difficult it will be to read. These variables are present in any text, but will be discussed as they relate to the sample text. Regarding one important factor, the complexity of the words in the sample text, it can be seen that the reader has few technical or anthropological terms to decode. In general, most of the words used can be found in everyday use and, apart from those that are specific to Islam, would require little or no explanation. Also, the incidence of words with three or more syllables or more than two morphemes is also low. At the sentence level, most of the sentences are fairly simple in structure as would be expected in a text that is basically conversational in style. Clauses are joined by simple connectors such as "and" and "but" or connectors like "because" which indicate basic relations such as cause and effect.

***Physical Presentation of the Text***

The physical presentation of the text itself, such as the size of print and presence of illustrations, also affects how readers perceive the difficulty of what they are reading, or about to read. The cover of the book from which the sample text is taken shows a picture of young Bedouin women at work. Not only

does it serve to awaken interest in the content of the book, it also suggests that the book itself would not be too difficult to read. The rest of the text is not overly illustrated but the print is a comfortable size to read. There are clear sub-headings and, because a substantial part of the text consists of reported conversation, the book has more the appearance of a selection of short stories, which in a way it is, than an authentic non-simplified anthropological text.

***Motivation to Read***

A factor that plays a significant role in reading is motivation (see Frager, 1993; Shirley & Reynolds, 1988). All of the factors cited above can increase motivation to read. Still, it is well known that the best way to create motivation for reading is by the choice of an interesting and readable text. A potentially motivating and interesting text can give readers motivation to continue their efforts to overcome a lack of content schema for a particular text.

As motivation for reading is a characteristic of the reader rather than the text itself, and as such is difficult to evaluate for practical purposes, gauging the potential motivation students will have for reading the text can be done by judging how closely the subject connects to the lives of the readers. For example, one can generally predict readers will have a higher motivation to read about current social issues that have a strong potential effect on them or someone they know. In this particular case, the selected text deals with an issue that has been the source of much debate in Malaysia recently. Furthermore, if the text is being used for tertiary students as is anticipated, they are of an age when the issue of relationships and marriage is particularly relevant.

## Preparing the Reader

The discussion of *Writing Women's Worlds* suggests that it is a text which is well within the reading capabilities of tertiary students for whom English is a second language, even though they may not have an adequate schema for its content. However, this may not always be enough for full comprehension of the text. For any such text the teacher may still need to provide some content. When a text that is not within the learner's schema is selected, teacher input and teaching strategy can also facilitate reading comprehension. The pre-reading stage is a common time for this kind of activity. (For post-reading activities, see Alvermann & Hynd, 1989 and Morrow & Weinstein, 1986).

For our sample text, let us assume that we have a class of first year undergraduates from a Chinese background with only a cursory knowledge of Islam. The first step then would be to provide them with some Islamic schemata by explaining to them the specific verse from the Qu'ran which deals with polygyny which, incidentally, is also quoted in the book:

> If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly ( with them) then only one…
> Qu'ran 4:3

For modern non-Muslim readers, an explanation of the historical necessity for polygyny and the restrictions placed on its practice will probably be necessary if they are going to read the sample passage with any kind of sympathy. Information about the Bedouin way of life and the role of the family in maintaining this way of life would also be important. The concept of family unity and cooperation should not be an alien one to most Asian students, although the way it is expressed may differ slightly from culture to culture. Certain aspects of Islam, such as fasting and the significance of fasting as an indicator of maturity would also need to be discussed before approaching the text in greater detail.

Coming to the text itself, there are three possible aspects of Bedouin marriage customs that students might have difficulty comprehending. They are child marriage, cousin marriage and polygyny. Sometimes drawing on the readers' knowledge of their own cultural history may help the learner access and develop the schemata for understanding the text even though there may be differences in terms of specifics. For example, non-Muslim Chinese learners of English could draw on their rich cultural tradition with its system of concubinage for an understanding of polygyny even though the status of the concubines used to be less than that of senior wives, unlike in Islam where all wives are meant to be treated equally. Non-Muslim Chinese students' knowledge of these inequalities in status might in fact make them even more understanding of Gateefa's privileged position than the Muslim reader. Even the reasons given by Sagr for

his several marriages would be understandable within the Chinese tradition being expressions first of his desire for a son and second his desire for status. An understanding of traditional culture could also provide an insight into both child and arranged marriages. Not too long ago, girls were married once they reached puberty and they generally did not select their own marriage partners.

On the other hand, cousin marriage is completely alien to traditional Chinese culture, where marrying someone with the same family name was taboo. Even today, some parents still disapprove of such a marriage. In this case, the fact that there is a complete contrast between Chinese culture, which encourages exogamy, and Bedouin culture, which encourages endogamy, can also be used to provide schemata for understanding the reading passage. In fact, the reader already has the schemata, because what s/he is reading is the opposite of what he already knows. By highlighting oppositions the teacher can further help the reader to understand what he is reading. On the other hand, the reasons for these differing approaches to the selection of a marriage partner are similar. Marriage is a means of establishing economic and social bonds for both cultures. However, for the Bedouin it is the consolidation of relationships between relatives which is of primary importance while for the Chinese, marriage creates ties with the non-family members of the community.

After pre-reading preparation, students should be much better prepared to read the selected text with greater understanding. Once the reading begins, the teacher can continue to stimulate learner motivation and interest by the use of appropriate general teaching methodologies, techniques and aids.

## Conclusion

It is sometimes desirable for students to be given reading material on unfamiliar topics, particularly if we want them to eventually see reading in a foreign language as a purposeful and intrinsically interesting activity which can enable them to gain knowledge of the world beyond their own experience. This is especially important in multicultural nations like Malaysia. This paper has suggested that unfamiliar material/text can be used successfully in the classroom and has proposed ways for teachers to select texts carefully and provide readers with adequate support both before and during the reading process. The reading teacher can make use of texts which are of fairly interesting and simply written genre as in oral discourse or autobiographies. In addition, the reading teacher can make use of other aspects of the text itself, such as text organization and presentation to help the readers decode the text. This entails providing readers with appropriate schemata by developing information during pre-reading activities and also attempting to activate what readers may already know about the more general aspects of the topic or other related topics e.g. in this case readers should already have a schema for marriage but they may be unfamiliar with different types of marriage customs. By building on the contrasts and comparisons which exist between what the readers find in the text and what they already know the teacher can facilitate the reading process.

The reading teacher need not be constrained by constantly having to select text which matches the content knowledge of the students. The teacher has to move away and beyond known schemata in selecting texts. In this way, new cultures can be made known to students of English.

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# Language Learning Strategies Instruction and Language Use Applied to Foreign Language Reading and Writing: A Simplified "Menu" Approach

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Extensive investigation has shown the importance of language learning strategies in making language learning more efficient and in producing a positive effect on learners' language use (Wenden and Rubin, 1987; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Chamot and O'Malley, 1994; Oxford, 1996, Cohen, 1998). With that in mind, the development of effective means of accommodating both language learning strategies instruction and actual language use is an increasingly important focus of research and inquiry, one with implications for foreign language reading and writing. I believe that the fullest potential for language learning strategies ultimately lies in self accessible instructional materials supporting autonomous strategy use. In this article, I will outline one possible way of addressing language learning strategies instruction and language use through what I have called a "Menu Approach". I will begin by considering the importance of a learning orientation and learner autonomy, both essential for effective learning strategy use. I will then introduce a model for Simplified Language Learning Strategies (SLLS). Then, after considering two important points relevant to strategies instruction and language use, I will introduce in a menu-like form what I call the SLLS Menu Approach, an approach to mastering language learning strategies that encourages autonomy but remains accessible to the learner in a manner which can complement existing university-level Japanese foreign language curriculums with direct reference to foreign language reading and writing.

## Learning and Autonomy

An important part of mastering a foreign language is mastering learning. Mastery of the fundamentals of learning is not only important in aiding language learners in (1) consolidating vocabulary, (2) acquiring basic structures, and (3) accumulating the necessary linguistic and communication skills, but (4) such mastery of learning skills puts the learner in active control of their own learning processes. The process of becoming sucessful at learning nurtures learners who are autonomous and seek individualized approaches to specific learning objectives. An approach which includes conscious consideration of the process of learning as well as a mastery of typical language syllabus content contributes not only to more effective mastery of that specific content in the traditional educational setting. It also helps lead to the development of lifelong learners, be that in language learning or some other area of interest that requires metacognition.

It must be added, however, that culture and practice have been found to exert a significant influence on the development of such an orientation to learning (Oxford, 1996). In Japan, cultural beliefs that in part dictate — and educational practices that reinforce — a teaching-centered orientation rather than a learning orientation might be viewed as important factors that diminish motivation as they reduce learner autonomy. A perceived lack of student motivation toward learning, along with the desire on the part of many Japanese students to

receive and absorb in a passive manner knowledge provided by teachers, are typically offered as major obstacles to effective learning in Japan (see, for example, Dadour and Robbins, 1996).

## A Model for Simplified Language Learning Strategies

The concept of "learning strategies" is based in part on cognitive learning theory, in which learning is seen as an active, mental, learner-constructed process. A seminal definition of language learning strategies was developed by Rebecca Oxford (1990), and is described as specific, self-directed steps taken by learners to enhance their own learning. The most comprehensive language learning strategy scheme, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), developed by Oxford, separates strategies into two strategy orientations and six strategies groups: (1) a direct learning orientation, consisting of (a) memory, (b) cognitive, and (c) linguistic deficiency compensation strategy groups, and (2) an indirect learning orientation, consisting of (a) metacognitive, (b) affective, and (c) social strategy groups.

The direct learning orientation strategies involve the identification, retention, storage, or retrieval of words, phrases, and other elements of the target language. The indirect strategies concern the management of the learning and include such activities as: needs assessment, activities planning and monitoring, and outcome evaluation. The indirect strategies also involve aspects that aid the learner in regulating emotions, motivation, and attitudes. These include routines for self-encouragement and the reduction of anxiety, and those which address the actions learners take in order to communicate with others, such as asking questions for clarification and cooperating with others in communication.

Each of these six strategy groups can be further subdivided, with the end result being a compendium of 60 specific strategies. Oxford's model outlines a comprehensive, multi levelled, and theoretically well-conceived taxonomy of language learning strategies. This taxonomy usefully encompasses a continuum of strategies, from affective personal management and general approaches to basic learning to specific language learning, memory, and communicative techniques. However, in keeping with the practical objective of autonomous learning strategies instruction and learner use, Cohen (1995) suggests that there is a need for greater care in specifying learning strategies on the basis of what is relevant for the given learner in the given learning circumstance. Thus, as a means of increasing accessibility and ease of use by learners and teachers alike, simplification of the language learning strategies model is important, desirable, and justifiable.

In order to make Oxford's model easier for teachers and learners to understand and use, I have simplified the terminology and reduced and clarified the options. I have done this by eliminating extraneous options, simplifying the terminology, and reorganizing the internal relational logic of the model's hierarchy. Such adjustments are necessary in order for learners to be able to understand better the overall model, as well as to be able to orient themselves in the overall scheme of the strategies scheme and to select appropriate strategies accordingly.

The hierarchical order of the scheme is from indirect to direct, grouped under the headings of management, learning, memory and communication. This model then becomes an integral part of the SLLS Menu Approach. The materials that learners might use in this simplified 'menu' include specific descriptions and explanations, instructions for and examples of use, and exercises for specific strategies. See Table 1 below for a more holistic presentation of the simplified model.

## Instruction and Use of Language Learning Strategies

In principle, language learning strategy instruction and use can be undertaken at any educational level, in any number of forms, including both general and specific language learning skills objectives (Oxford & Leaver, 1996). Two important issues to consider in the instruction and use of such strategies are (1) the degree of curricular "integration" versus "detachment" and (2) the level of learner control.

### *Integration Versus Detachment*

The degree of integration of learning strategies into the existing curriculum can in reality be

## Table 1
## A Simplified Model of Language Learning Strategies

**Management Strategies**

* Prepare for learning: Prepare learning environment; prepare learning objectives and learning schedule.

* Focus your learning: Use "purpose-requirements-resources-preparation" process; use selective focus.

*Motivate and monitor: Motivate yourself, and monitor your progress.

**Organizational Strategies**

*Apply and analyze: Apply language rules; analyze real language

*Control content: Compare and contrast content; transfer and translate content; combine and recombine content.

*Identify structure: Identify patterns; highlight and outline; use memory strategies.

*Move and make: Move with physical actions; make learning materials.

*Create links: Use imagery, mind mapping, and similarity; categorize and group; connect and personalize content.

*Learn and re-learn; repeat-repeat; practice patterns; use overlapping review; seek real language opportunities.

**Communication Strategies**

*Cooperate and empathize: Empathize in order to understand; cooperate to communicate.

*Focus ---> adjust ---> repeat --->succeed:
–Focus on main idea or specific objective.
–Summarize and paraphrase; adjust topic or message.
–Repeat or clarify; use any means cognitively available or in the communicative setting (fluency, pragmatic literacy) to negotiate and construct meaning.

conceptualized as reflecting a continuum which extends from fully integrated, curriculum-based programs to detached, task- or skills-specific instruction with near autonomous use by the learner. Indeed, several fully-integrated curriculum-based language learning strategies instructional approaches have been developed (see Oxford, 1996; Cohen, 1998). However, one of the most important factors in successful strategy instruction depends on just how informed it is: the need, usefulness, and benefits of a given strategy are emphasized along with a focus on direct, explicit instruction. This is true because of the emphasis which can be placed on a conceptual three-sided basis — that of learning objective/ learning strategy/learner need and fit — for selecting learning strategies. Ultimately, the strategies which learners make the most use of and those which yield the most benefit are not necessarily those which reflect the best fit in terms of the learning objectives. Rather, those which prove popular with students and bring tangible results are ones readily adapted to their learning level and disposition.

Moreover, adoption of fully instructional curriculum models with integrated strategies entails adjustments on the part of teachers. It is teachers who must undergo a crucial conceptual shift toward a learner-centered classroom, making the necessary adjustments in their existing curriculum, and learning the specific techniques of language learning strategies and instruction. What's more they must accept the problematic element of uncertainty inherent in curriculum change. Teachers are often uncomfortable with making such changes and thus ignore or resist introducing learning strategies (Nyikos, 1996). This is particularly true in an environment rife with pedagogical and curricular contradiction concerning how and what students should be taught, as is the case of education in Japan (though true of many other national educational systems as well).

### *Learner Control*

The idea of a "control continuum" is a notion developed by Oxford and Leaver (1996) to describe the successive levels of awareness, attention, intentionality, and control (or autonomy) which learners can develop in their use and understanding of language learning strategies. In any given learning situation, students will be at different learning strategies levels and will approach increasing levels of learning strategy control with different time frames.

The first step in strategy instruction is generating awareness, which can be accomplished by introducing the concept of learning strategies and having learners complete a learning strategies use assessment. Assessments — activities such as surveys, think-alouds, diaries, and group discussions — do not explicitly or directly implement strategy instruction. Instead they can be used to help students reflect on their own intuitive and already existent intentional strategy use.

At the attention level, the language learning strategies model is introduced and learners note which strategies are used for specific learning tasks and objectives, thereby developing an individual database of learning strategies. Intentionality is an active step in which learners autonomously select strategies for learning objectives on the basis of a triangular fit of individual learner/learning objective/learning strategy and their increasing experience.

Control is considered the highest level of strategy use, in which learners plan, self-assess, and evaluate overall strategy use and self-adjust use while continually incorporating a broad range of language learning strategies in their studies. In a sense, learning strategy control returns the learner to the state of unconscious awareness of learning strategy, but in this case, by virtue of familiarity and ease of use.

## The SLLS Menu Approach Explained: An Adaptable Menu

On the basis of the need for detachment and control, one way to achieve instruction and use of language learning strategies is through what I have called an SLLS Menu Approach. The 'menu' metaphor represents an approach to instruction and use based on the principles of choice and control, as in choosing from a menu of possibilities. As will be shown, this approach reflects the necessity for combining a model of clarity with both curricular detachment and increasing levels of self-control. These elements can then be wrapped into one practical approach which can be used with both teacher-centered, grammar-oriented instruction and student-centered, communicative-oriented instruction. This Menu Aproach ultimately proves feasible as an independent, self-directed learning curriculum.

In this Menu Approach, the language learning strategies are considered as complementary to the existing curriculum — as a means of enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency with which the learner accomplishes the learning as dictated by the curriculum orientation or objectives. However, in addition to addressing the learning objectives specified and prioritized in the curriculum, the menu approach allows for the specific and individual learning needs of the learner. In this sense, the approach also accommodates the needs of independent and autonomous learners.

I have developed five basic orientations to the SLLS Menu Approach: (1) a Learning to Learn orientation, (2) a Learning Process orientation, (3) a Traditional Skills orientation, (4) a Language Structure orientation, and (5) an Individual Development orientation, as outlined in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**
**The SLLS Approach Menu**

**Learning to Learn (Control Continuum: Awareness-Attention-Intention-Control)**

*Awareness Level: Introduce language learning strategy concept; assess intuitive strategy use.

*Attention Level: Practice language learning strategies use with prepared examples and exercises.

*Intention Level: Apply language learning strategies to curriculum or independent learning needs using the learning process orientation (below).

**Learning Process**

*Preparation: Management Strategies

*Learning: Organization Strategies

*Review and Practice: Memory Strategies

*Activation: Communication Strategies

**Traditional Skills**

| Skill | Strategy | Skill/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Receptive: listening, reading | Organization | Apply and analyze |
| Expressive: speaking, writing | Communication | Cooperate and empathize |
| | Memory | Create links |

**Language Structure**

| Structural Focus | Strategies | Skill/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling, discourse, other | Management | Focus learning |
| | Organization | Apply and analyze |
| | Memory | Create links |
| | Communication | Cooperate and empathize |

**Individual Development**

*Based on specific objectives at the level of strategy group, strategy set, or specific strategy. Example: Content organization strategy group ----> find structure strategy set ----> highlight and outline specific strategy skills.

### *SLLS Menu Approach: Instruction and Use*

Each of the five sub-menus (see Table 2 above) has an inherent orientation. For example, the Learning to Learn sub-menu is based on an increasing control continuum, whereas the Learning Process or Traditional Skills sub-menus are, for example, based on use of the menu in an actual learning exercise, albeit with a specific learning or traditional skill orientation.

SLLS Menu instruction and use as presented in the menu schema can be facilitated through an in-class introduction and description, variously combined with modeling, practice, evaluation, and directed toward the goal of strategy transfer. Such instruction can be undertaken on a regular, random or one-off instructional basis, and, if materials development is a concern, can be incorporated into language textbooks as independent learning sections or simply left to a totally separate guidebook. The latter type of material would be an appropriate means for instructors who have no intention of teaching for comprehensive mastery of the learning strategies in their classes, but who would like to include it in their materials for students' independent work.

Once the learner has achieved relative levels of attention, ntention, and control, the Menu can be used as a guide in the selection and use of specific language learning strategies as dictated by task objective or learner need.Use of the SLLS Approach Menu should prove to be fairly straightforward. Given a Learning to Learn orientation, for example, a teacher or learner might simply work through the various steps as specified in the Menu by using the descriptions, explanations, examples and exercises accompanying the materials together with whatever content is required by the curriculum or chosen by the learner. Likewise, given a Learning Process orientation, the learner could approach the material to be learned using the steps outlined in the Menu, again using the detailed descriptionsand the like that accompany the Menu. Given a topical orientation, such as a Traditional Skills orientation or a Language Structural orientation, specific learning strategies from the appropriate Menu sections might used to master the material. However, the potential for interpretation and variation in the use of leaning strategies should prove near limitless and bounded only by the users' needs and imagination.

## The SLLS Menu Approach in Foreign Language Reading and Writing

Looking at the Traditional Skills section of the SLLS Menu Approach in Table 2, reading is identified as a receptive skill for which organization is the appropriate strategy and writing is identified as an expressive skill for which communication is the appropriate strategy. The respective comprehensions of reading (literal, inferential, critical, appreciative) aside, in most foreign languge reading activities, the specific organizational strategies are (as shown in Table 1) apply and analyze, control content, and identify structure. Taking these in reverse order, one of the more important skills in reading is to note the structure at both the level of sentence as well as paragraph and section of text. Highlighting important parts of text is a means of providing organization. Comparing and contrasting the content, both as is in the target language, or by translating into the native language, are means of controling the content in reading. These are means of viewing the content in terms of something you are familiar with. Finally, most reading activities are based on use of materials which conform to grammatical standards; therefore, to increase your semantic understanding, analyze what you are reading in terms of what you know of grammatical rules.

As for writing, given the fact that most foreign language writing in the early stages is undertaken with educational aims and that time is usually not a communicative constraint to fluency, the most important communication strategy is to focus-adjust-repeat (as shown in Table 1). Contextualizing these three steps for the writing process, focus aids you in maintaining concentration on the objective of the writing; adjusting encourages you to consider different means of succeeding in achieving the objective; and repeating (in writing, contrary to speaking) forces you to read what you have written while considering focus (effectiveness) and the need for adjustment (change to a better word or phrasing).

## Conclusion

I have at least implied that instruction and use of

learning strategies must be amenable to the existing curriculum and prevailing learning culture while striving to be accessible for both curriculum-oriented teachers and potentially independent learners. With this goal of flexibility in mind, I have further implied that the existing models of learning strategies are either too complex, too highly integrated with particular contexts, or too curriculum- and teacher dependent to be of practical value to the independent language learner. Thus, in this article I have proposed and outlined an SLLS Approach which I believe is clear, sufficiently detached, and potentially more responsive and oriented to learners. It is a scalable and adaptable model meant to complement any specific foreign language curriculum. I have also shown how it can be applied to foreign language reading and writing. At this time, this Menu Approach exists mostly in the language of this article. However, the next step will be to construct a theory-in-action that will enable me to report on the development and testing of actual SLLS materials for classroom instruction and individual learning.

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*YOSHIMURA, Cont'd from p. 10*



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# The Promise and Practice of Extensive Reading

## An Interview with George Jacobs and Willy Renandya, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (RELC), Singapore

**by Andy Barfield**
***University of Tsukuba, Japan***

George Jacobs and Willy Renandya, of Seamo Regional Language Centre (RELC), are active researchers and promoters of Extensive Reading (ER) in EFL in Asia, and are two of the coeditors of the book, *Successful strategies for extensive reading* (1997, SEAMO). They were interviewed via e-mail by Andy Barfield.

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***Let me begin by thanking you for agreeing to do this interview over e-mail. Can I start by asking you both how you first became interested in extensive reading? From your own experience in learning a language, from teacher training, your own research, or through other means?***

*Jacobs*: ER appealed to me for a few reasons. First, as a child growing up in the U.S. state of Illinois, I was, for a while, an avid reader. I was reminded of myself back then when about eight years ago, I read about the flashlight-under-the-blanket phenomenon, where children are so keen on reading that they smuggle a flashlight into their bedroom so they can continue reading after their parents turn off the lights. I remember a series about Cowboy Sam. I've never seen it as an adult, but I recall being quite taken by it as a kid.

A second reason that I liked ER was my own experience as a second language learner studying Spanish. I remember in junior high school reading a simplified Spanish version of *Don Quixote* and then our class going to watch the musical *Man of La Mancha*. Later, I would read a book in English and then read the Spanish version. I did that with *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* by B. Traven. Reading a good story is fun in any language.

*Renandya*: Like George, I became interested in extensive reading from my own experience in learning a language. I learned English as a foreign language in Indonesia, where English is not widely used. The main source of input was the classroom, i.e., from the teachers ... It was when I was at university doing my first degree in TEFL that I was first introduced to graded readers. But I didn't really enjoy reading these simplified stories. While the library had a good number of graded materials, most of them were not too appealing for me. Many of the collection were of the literary types (those by Charles Dickens, Shakespeare, etc.). I got hooked into reading extensively when I accidentally picked up a "whodunit" novel in a local bookstore, a Perry Mason series by Gardner. It was not easy at first to read this unabridged novel. But after reading three or four books by the same author, I found that I could understand the story better, and soon found myself reading the other series. I must have read at least 30 or 40 Perry Mason series by the time I finished my TEFL degree, in addition to devouring quite a number of other similar stories by, for example, Agatha Christie. I can see now quite clearly that the reading that I did contributed most to my language development.

*Jacobs*: Another factor that led me to ER was the Input Hypothesis. I began language teaching in the 1980s when the emphasis on comprehensible input was at its height, and I still believe there's a lot to it, even if just large doses of comprehensible input may not alone be sufficient for advanced proficiency in a L2. I read lots of stuff by Krashen, and I still admire his work and that of

others such as David Eskey, Jeff McQuillan, Beatrice Dupuy, and Lucy Tse who have worked in that same vein.

*Renandya*: Yes ...two other important influences for me have been Warwick Elley (the book flood project in Fiji), as well as my own research with George. This has further convinced me of the tremendous benefits of extensive reading in second/ foreign language learning.

*Jacobs*: Could I add two more points? One is ER's link to learner autonomy, and the other the connection with co-operative learning. I try to view the goal of language education as not just to add another skill to students' repertoires. I also consider what effect instruction has on the whole person and on the type of citizen students are or will become of their country and of the world. For this reason, I attempt to use teaching methods that give people the skills and confidence they need to stand on their own two feet rather than waiting for big brother to tell them what to do. ER provides students with a key route toward understanding the world for themselves.

As for cooperative learning, it may seem to be a contradiction to talk about learner autonomy in one breath and cooperative learning in the next, but actually I think the two come together smoothly in ER. The reading that students do in ER gives groups something to talk about and work on, while groups provide a great way for students to share the joys of reading, thus encouraging each other to do more ER.

Last but not least, I saw the enjoyment that my students experienced when they read and told each other and me about their reading. I also heard similar stories from other teachers. I saw students going back to the library and reading beyond the required amount. Not surprisingly, I also saw a minority who just went through the motions. The worst case I recall was when I was teaching English in a high school in Hawaii. Every morning, the students were to do ER in class. In honor of Hawaii's famous waves, this part of ER was called SURF (Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun). Most of my class were native English speakers, but some were recent immigrants. One of these kids, despite all the tricks I tried, most often spent SURF time with his head in his arms on the desk.

*The enjoyment is central— at the same time, the success and the resistance sound familiar! You work on in-service development courses on the teaching of reading and writing, so could I ask you, George, how a teacher might need to change their practice to help overcome such resistance?*

*Jacobs*: One example of a key moment of change was told to me by a Singaporean teacher who was doing ER with a Primary 6 (about twelve years old) class. She had been attending an in-service course on reading and writing instruction in which I had emphasised ER. We had read an article by Vivienne Yu, in which Vivienne draws lessons from her experience implementing ER in Hong Kong. One of the points that Vivienne makes is that teachers need to be motivators and enthusiasts for ER, part of which entails that when the students are reading silently, the teacher should be reading silently too.

This teacher had implemented a 20-minute slot for USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading). However, it wasn't going very well. The students were not too keen on reading, and she was spending her time not reading but patrolling the classroom in a vain attempt to get her students to read. Finally, she gave up and just sat at her desk, opened a book, and didn't look up for the entire 20 minutes. The first few times, she heard noise and was very tempted to look up and chastise the wrong doers, but she resisted the temptation. As the days went by, she kept her nose buried in her book, but her ears were detecting a greater silence. After about two weeks, she looked up. All the students were reading.

I think this is a great example of the power of trust. The teacher was telling her students that she trusted them. At first, some abused this trust, but eventually this teacher accomplished her goal of getting everyone to read during USSR not by badgering them into submission but by setting a good example and trusting that students would have the good sense to follow that example.

*That's a great role modeling story of the spaces that can open up with ER. I'd like to go back, for a moment, to Willy's mention of the book flood metaphor and example. Getting ER going requires a large quantity of reading materials. In your experience, is it generally possible for teachers to gain access to such materials?*

*Jacobs*: That's right. For ER to succeed, teachers need a large quantity of materials, and these need to be at a range of difficulty levels and to suit a range of interests. The issue of procuring these ER materials when funds are limited or appropriate materials are not available is a difficult one. We just had a group of 20 second language teachers from Vietnam here at RELC for a course. I was, as usual, extolling the virtues of ER. We read the Vivienne Yu article mentioned above, and the teachers also did some ER activities to improve their own proficiency in English. The main ER activity they did was one that combines ER and cooperative learning. It's called "Book Wheels" and can be found in the book on reading in TESOL's New Ways series, *New ways in teaching reading*. In "Book Wheels," students work in groups to tell each other about a book they've read and to ask each other higher-order thinking questions about their books.

The teachers from Vietnam enjoyed "Book Wheels" and agreed that ER would be great for their students. However, again and again, they kept asking, "But where are we going to get the books?" Obviously, the easiest way to get books is for the school or the students to buy them, as is often done in places such as Singapore or the US.

*Is that the case, though, in Vietnam? I'd guess funds for any kind of educational materials can be severely limited.*

*Jacobs*: Fortunately, other means exist even when funds are limited. Some of these are described in the works listed in the section on Reading Materials in the bibliography of works on ER in second language education that Willy, Julian Bamford and I have been compiling. This is available on the ER website <http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/er/>.

There's also the opportunity for localising content here. Teachers can create materials for students. Gaudart (1994), and Toh and Raja (1997) describe two different ways this was done in Malaysia. For instance, when Marcus Raja was a school principal in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, he wrote stories for his students to usefor ER. Since he was writing the stories himself, instead of buying them, he was able to situate the stories in the local context, thus, perhaps increasing students' interest and making the stories more comprehensible.

Students can also be a source of ER materials. Three chapters in the book on ER that Willy and I edited with Colin Davis depict various ways in which students can write ER materials. For example, in one chapter, Beatrice Dupuy and Jeff McQuillan describe a program in which university students of French as a second language wrote and illustrated their own ER books with help from their teacher. This helped to overcome the problem of finding materials that would be of interest to university-age students, yet were comprehensible for students of low proficiency in the L2.

*I'd like to move the discussion to ways of motivating low-level, reluctant readers, as I think for many teachers in Japan this is a key issue. Willy, let me ask you about parallel-text bilingual readers (one language one page, the other language the other page) and how that kind of format may be very close to what beginning readers do in the L2, while, at the same time, published readers almost always follow a monolingual mode. Do you have any comments on bilingual readers as a possible appropriate or inappropriate starting format?*

*Renandya*: Motivation is indeed a big issue in foreign language learning and this is particularly so with low proficiency pupils. My research (Renandya et al., 1999) in teacher/learner beliefs confirmed my own suspicion (and that of others, e.g., Dornyei, 1998) that motivation is one of the most important factors in language learning.

I have never used bilingual readers with my students, but I can see their potential in helping those low-level, reluctant readers to pick up their first book. Bilingual readers can potentially break poor readers' reluctance to read, as they can always fall back on the native language version on the opposite page when a comprehension problem arises. But as soon as they have built up enough confidence, they should move on to monolingual readers. Care should be taken to ensure that these beginning readers who lack confidence get ER materials that are at the right difficulty level. For these readers, the right level might not be i, or i +1. What they need is probably i –1 or even i –2 materials (see Day and Bamford's extensive reading book for a similar view), and preferably ones with lots of visual/pictorial support. In my ER class with beginning adult students, I always make it a point to tell them to read books that are both easy and interesting. Once they have become comfortable reading easy materials, I

encourage them to read more challenging (but not too challenging) materials. Fortunately, our library has a good collection of readers for learners of varied interests and proficiency levels.

*Perhaps the bilingual question can also be raised with 'output' from ER. I'm wondering if there is also a possible gradation from a bilingual to a more monolingual mode in activities around ER? For example, low-proficiency may write in their L1 about what they have read in their L2, and gradually increase the L2 ratio as they read more.*

*Renandya*: For low-proficiency L2 learners, we should be more concerned with the amount of reading (comprehensible language input) that they get, rather than with the types and forms of post ER activities (output). The key principle in designing post ER activities is that they should be easy to do and highly appealing to the learners. Whether or not L1 or L2 is used is not a central issue, at least for beginning readers. There is one study by Mason and Krashen (1997) that attempted to address the issue of the role of L1 in post ER activities. Students who wrote summaries in L1 and L2 performed equally well on a number of dependent measures used in the study. In addition, both groups of students in general performed better than the non-ER group.

*Very much to the point. George, would you say a bit more about how you see student-student cooperation fitting with ER?*

*Jacobs*: A couple of weeks ago, I finished a 1998 book called *The Nurture Assumption* <http://home.att.net/~xchar/tna/> that makes the claim that peers have a more powerful effect than parents on the development of children and adolescents. Whether or not you agree with this view, I think all teachers have seen how students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors rub off on their classmates, for better or worse. For instance, a core group of avid readers can help create a classroom of avid readers.

*That reminds very much of Tim Murphey's work at Nanzan University, Japan, with Near Peer Role Models and his book Language Hungry, i.e., using models of excellence for students from other students (Murphey, 1998).*

*Jacobs*: That's just it. Let me share some other ideas I've read and heard about and/or tried for using peer power to promote ER. Most of these techniques also have the advantage of providing students with opportunities to produce language. Such language will sometimes include new vocabulary, structures, ideas, and information that students encountered while reading.

The Internet TESL Journal had an article in 1998 by Heal <http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt/98/dec/sh_heal.html> describing how group activities to accompany a class reader seemed to increase student motivation for ER. In Heal's class, the groups first answered questions written by the teacher. Later, each group wrote questions for other groups.

In a setting in which each student reads a different book, Willy and I have had success with students coming together to tell each other about the books they've read. Students briefly describe the story for their groupmates and then peers ask questions. Another way to encourage students to share with peers what they've read is via Literature Circles, groups of students who come together to discuss what they've been reading. Dupuy (1998) describes how Literature Circles worked in her intermediate French classes.

Art is another medium via which students can share with each other about what they've read. For instance, students might design posters, murals, board games, collages, book covers, bookmarks, and drawings of key scenes to advertise books they like. A few teachers have told me that their students even made "dioramas," a kind of model, to illustrate scenes from their books.

*Yes, I've really enjoyed comic strip (manga) summaries and interpretations created by my students here—with speech bubbles and captions, for example...*

*Jacobs*: Right—the artwork can often be accompanied by language. For example, a book cover could include a blurb on the back of the type found on commercially produced books. Drama can also be used by students to advertise good books, such as when students do a skit to illustrate a portion of the book or do a dramatic reading of lines from something they've read.

Another means for students to inform their peers about what to read would be doing mini-reviews or just giving a quick rating, such as one to five stars,

to let classmates know which books to select and which to neglect. Of course, as Willy points out, the key in ER is the reading, not the post-reading activity. Thus, students do the post-reading to build confidence, to use what they have learned in a productive mode, and to infect their peers — and maybe even their teachers—with the joy of reading and specific books with which to experience that joy.

*Well, we're nearing the end of the discussion, so I guess my last question neatly falls within the medium of the interview, and how ER may develop through the Web. The Bangkok Post has a great resource page in its Student Weekly for graded newspaper reading. I'm wondering if both of you could mention some other web resources for ER for learners, as well as give your forecasts as to how technology may mix and match with book-based ER.*

*Jacobs*: Thanks for raising the question about ER and the Web, Andy. It's an important one. Some people have predicted that the Web will go the way of other much-heralded innovations that eventually became at most only a marginal part of language teaching, like the language lab. However, I think the Web is destined to play more of a role, although I've got little experience with the Web and ER. What I use the Web for in my work is sending email messages and attached files, belonging to list serves, getting information from websites, and building websites. I've done some of this with the classes I teach, both those for language teachers and those for language learners. My students have never used the Web to do ER, except as they've read things on websites, but one change I am seeing is that earlier people wouldn't read things off the computer screen; they always wanted to print them out. Many people are still like this, but more and more — me included — are comfortable reading directly from the screen, which saves lots of paper. This comfort with reading from the screen paves the way for electronic books which — from what I've read — look like books and can be loaded with any book we want. We can read these electronic books while standing in a bus, sitting at a coffee shop, or lying in bed.

I also read in a United Nations publication about overcoming the problem of lack of books in poor countries by putting lots of books of CD-ROMs, but the article didn't say anything about overcoming the problem of lack of computers and lack of infrastructure such as electricity. This brings up the issue of whether the use of the Web for ER will lead to the same discrepancies between rich and poor that we see with ER via hard copies of books. Right now, that discrepancy looks likely to arise. That said, the Web does offer great possibilities for learner autonomy. As long as we've got the necessary technology — and every year I can see access expanding here in SE Asia — we can choose from millions of web sites offering a bewildering range of materials from a wide variety of perspectives. For instance, Project Gutenberg, <http://promenade/pg/> offers many books — for example, those by Dickens — for free, and the Encyclopedia Britannica website <http://www.eb.com:180/> offers not just the encyclopedia, but also lots of other resources. Derewianka (1997) offers more ideas on this.

As to collaboration, some people worry that the Web will cause us to live isolated lives, never going out and instead ordering everything we need via computer. On the other hand, computers offer so many new ways for us to connect and collaborate with others. In specific regard to ER, two examples of this Web-based interaction would be e-mailing a book we've enjoyed to classmates or sending them the address of a website we think they should check out. I'm not saying that electronic interaction, even if we have sound and video, is the same as old-fashioned face-to-face interaction, but it is a useful partner to live contact, and who knows what the future will hold for human relations.

*Willy, over to you for your closing comments...*

*Renandya*: Thanks again for the interview. I think George and I have covered a lot of ground. I just want to end by quoting Christine Nuttall (1982, p.168):

> The best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is read extensively in it.

For obvious reasons, living among native speakers for an extended period of time is not possible for the majority of L2 learners. So, that leaves us with the second option. But surprisingly, despite compelling evidence demonstrating the

benefits of extensive reading, many of us are still not doing ER. So let me encourage you all, if you haven't already, to begin ER programme in your school now.

One last comment. ER is good for students. It is also good for *teachers*, especially EFL teachers. The Vietnamese EFL teachers that George mentioned earlier (whom I also taught) agreed that the ER they did at RELC was very useful for them. They hoped to continue doing ER when they returned to Vietnam, in addition to launching ER for their students. Many L2 teachers in the region I have talked to have indicated that they need to upgrade their L2 proficiency in order to serve their students better. I believe that ER can help them further develop their competence in the language.

*That brings us full circle, and opens up many more interesting questions. Thank you again to both of you for doing this interview and for providing so much food for thought.*

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**Contact Information**


*George Jacobs* looks forward to continuing the dialogue with any readers who wish to explore projects of mutual interest by e-mail at <gmjacobs@pacific.net.sg> or at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Thebes/1650/index.htm> *Willy Renandya* can be reached at SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore.

Willy, George, and Julian Bamford are looking for nice and valuable people to join them in maintaining the ER in L2 bibliography.



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# Expressive Writing Skills Enhanced Through the Use of Poetry

**Prisca Molotsi**
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A problem that I have often encountered while teaching both oral communication and writing classes here in Japan is what I see as a lack of expression on the part of the students. Students seem to be inhibited, either for cultural or social reasons, from expressing their thoughts and feelings. Conversation and written exercises therefore tend to be dull and void of the "colorings" that add life to language. Using poetry, I have found, greatly helps enhance the students' writing and speaking skills. In this paper I will describe a series of activities I have found useful for using poetry to bring out students' expressiveness and creativity.

There are many reasons why poetry is beneficial in helping students develop both their writing and speaking skills:

- poetry is an expression of our personal feelings which are important in any language,
- the rhythms of a language are easier to assimilate through poetry,
- ideas and personal ideas can be brought into play more so than in other types of writing,
- poetry enables us to experience the information relayed to us. (Perrine 1977, p. 4)

There are two ways in which to approach the utilization of poetry in language: the technical approach, involving the formal analysis of poetry and techniques for writing it, and the emotional approach, which focuses on self-expression. While I believe that concentrating on the technical approach is beneficial for those aspiring to be great poets, in the series of exercises described below I concentrate on the emotional approach, for the aim of this exercise is to enable students to express themselves freely and in ways in which their language will be enriched.

Expressing oneself freely is something can be quite alien to Japanese students. It is often said that Japanese have an inner and an outer self, the former being symbolized by the heart and the latter by the face, in particular the mouth (Lebra, 1976, p. 159). Encouraged not to reveal too much by the outer self and not to believe too much in it, Japanese tend to think that the inner self is thus the truer self. It is therefore very difficult to extract comments and opinions from Japanese students, unlike classes in America or in South Africa where students are encouraged to be as intellectually vocal as possible. In Japan, an old saying holds that "mouths are to eat with, not to speak with" *(Kuchi wa motte kuubeshi, motte iu bekarazu)*.

Aware of the difficulties in getting students to be more expressive, I use poetry in a series of "loosening" exercises, incorporated into lessons over several weeks, that target the inner self, or the truer self, of the students. Regardless of whether the class is an oral communication class or a writing class, the first step in targeting the inner self is through writing because, as Takie Sugiyama Lebra (1976) states, Japanese find their individuality in self-reflection, and proof of one's introspection is usually in some written form, for example, a diary (p.159).

## Preparing to Write

As I mentioned above, little emphasis is placed on the technical aspects of poetry. It is important, however, for students to be aware of certain important features such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia, similes, and personification. These aspects of language are used

more frequently in poetry (of which musical lyrics are a part) than in any other written genre, and they add a rich dimension to the written word. Existing poems can be used to illustrate these resources to the students. Therefore, in the first class where poetry is used, students are asked to bring in poems which they enjoy. I encourage them to bring in poems which they enjoyed in their childhood because I find that this type of enjoyment is innocent and pure, unbiased by what we learn as we grow older (for example, "correct" stanzas, "proper" rhyme, etc.). Students write reasons why they enjoy the poems, this being done to reopen the students' appreciation of poetry. Poems need not necessarily be in English, and you will find that the great majority of poems enjoyed by people in their childhood will be in their native language. The purpose of this exercise is to rekindle those feelings of enjoyment in the students.

The purpose of the second exercise is to work on the students' senses, the sense of touch, smell, sound, sight and taste. To do this, I begin with the sense of sight. I bring a red apple into the classroom and ask the students to write down the color of the apple without stating that it is red. Students are encouraged to use their other senses to help them. Here are two examples of such sentences:

> It is the color of blood.
> It is the color I feel after drinking too much.

(In the second sentence, the student has used both the senses of touch and taste.)

The same is done with the sense of taste. Students are given, for example, a pickled plum to taste and once again they are requested to write down what it tastes like without actually saying it tastes salty or sour. Here are two examples:

> Tastes of the sea.
> It tastes like my tears when my boyfriend said good-bye.

This is done with all of the five senses. The purpose is to encourage students to start to think poetically and thus to think expressively, to communicate their ideas not in a static and practical way, but in a deeper, more intense way, thus giving both the writer and the reader a greater awareness of the information being communicated.

The third exercise concentrates on feelings. For this, music is played and students write down what they feel. Initially, responses are often short or limited to adjectives: I feel sad; I feel happy. However, as this exercise progresses I have noticed that students, once comfortable with what they are doing, will write longer phrases. For example, "I'm in a dark room, and it's raining outside" was written by one student to describe the melancholic feelings that a piece of gospel music invoked in her.

## Writing the Poem

The final step is for students to write a poem. The aim, once again, is not to develop a classroom of Wordsworths and Shakespeares, but to get students to communicate in a sensuous, emotional, and imaginative way (Perrine, 1977, p. 10), thus enriching their language. In an idea borrowed from *Poem into Poem* (Maley and Moulding, 1992), students are asked to write down memories of their first school, paying particular attention to color, sound, taste, smell, and feelings. Because the students are now used to exploring and expressing the sensory parts of language, this proves to be an easy exercise to do. Depending on the types of students one has, this exercise can be done individually or in very small groups. I find the latter works for students who are still shy about expressing themselves openly. The next step is for the students to write sentences about each area of feeling, and finally to collaborate these sentences into a poem. The following is a result of this exercise. It is an excerpt taken from a poem written by a group of second-year Japanese students majoring in English:

> I remember making a journey
> Around the elephant mountain
> Surrounded with blooming sunflowers
> Under the clear blue sky.
> Little flying friends chirping
> Calling for us to play.
> I remember smashing our hands together
> Dancing to the tune, singing a melody
> Sounds made by our clever teacher's fingers.

## Conclusion

I have found that by doing these exercises, students become more aware of the different ways in which they can communicate a range of feelings. Because there is no correct or incorrect way of expressing these feelings, it becomes very personal and allows often inhibited students to open up, if not verbally, then through the written language. This exercise can also be taken one step further, where the written poems become the objects of discussion, therefore adding an oral dimension to the exercises. Furthermore, students can be requested to keep a journal or a log book in which they record their experiences on a daily or weekly basis. They should be encouraged to use what they have learned from these exercises to be as expressive as possible without inhibition.

I have observed that not only do students enjoy working with poetry, but also, because they are being so expressive, their vocabulary base broadens immensely. Most important of all, their writing ceases to be dull and non-captivating and becomes rich and interesting. As Keith Waterhouse states, writing can either drone or it can sing: "Aim for the singing kind—writing that has life, rhythm, harmony, style—and you will never lose your reader" (1994, p.143). Through these exercises, I believe that students are taking one step to achieving this goal.

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# On-line Newspapers as a Source for Language Teaching Material

*by Paul Wringer and David Dycus*
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For sheer variety and timeliness, it's hard to find a better source of teaching material than the newspaper, and on-line newspapers have made access to the news easier than ever. Such access is a great advantage, but finding articles appropriate to learners' reading level is a challenge. With this in mind, we present this set of links. In the first section we present sites that have an explicit educational focus somehow related to the reading the news. In the second we present on-line papers without any educational focus but with qualities that make them good places to look for authentic news articles. Finally, we list some sites that specialize in links to newspapers and other news media.

## Sites with Material for Language Education

The biggest question for any search of the WWW is usually where to begin. For language teachers looking for links to newspapers, a good place to start is Francis Britto's **Web Pages for Language Learners** <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/wp4el-e/wp4eltop.htm> at the *Daily Yomiuri On-Line* newspaper, specifically Reading News Part 1 <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/wp4el-e/> and Part 2 <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/wp4el-e/wp4el016.htm>. Britto's lists of annotated links cover many topics of interest to language teachers, and the ones on finding and using on-line newspapers that actually carry educational activities/supplements to their articles could well be the only information many instructors will need. (*Note*: Some sites discussed below are also described at the *Daily Yomiuri* site.)

**The Bangkok Post**
<http://www.bangkokpost.net/education/home.htm>

This is an excellent site made with EFL readers in mind. It's a good idea to check out the Site Map for the Educational Services Home Page first <http://www.bangkokpost.net/education/map.htm> as it gives a good view of what is on the site and how to get to it. It contains links to the following sections: Feature Focus, Improving Your English; Teaching Tips; Reading Tips; Department Services; Tips for Students. Feature Focus presents a summary of the day's featured article with a link to the full article. The full-length article is a true reading exercise, complete with pre-reading and post-reading exercises to help readers hone their reading strategies and skills. The other sections, as their names imply, offer help and advice to EFL readers.

**The New York Times /On the Web/ Learning Network**
<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/>

This is another newspaper that includes resources for education, although not specifically for EFL/ESL. Lesson plans are archived and can be searched, and the grade level for each lesson plan is indicated. The main list of menu options has sections called Student Connection (includes news summaries and quizzes), Teacher Connection (including daily and archived lesson plans), and Parents Connection (includes follow-up discussion topics).

**Los Angeles Times**
<http://www.latimes.com>

This major newspaper has a page dedicated to education, entitled Launch Point, designed to get young learners and teachers connected to education content sites. At <http://www.latimes.com/news/

learning/launch/vocabulary.htm> are links to sites to vocabulary development pages, divided into levels 1, 2, and 3 (which seem to equate with beginner, intermediate, and advanced).

**Story of the Week (CNN)**
<http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/week.html>

A well-organized site, easy to use. Each week a story of the week is presented in both abridged and full form. Includes instructor pages and categorized story archives. Menu options include Story, Abridged Story, and Story Outline. The page is linked to the Learning Resources page <http://cnnsf.com/>, which offers "web-delivered instruction using current and past CNN San Francisco bureau news stories...for adult literacy and educational purposes." Many stories have audio and video support. The Headline News Brief button takes you to a page of story summaries and links to other stories (in turn linked to other related stories) at the main CNN site and to related sites.

**English to Go**
<http://www.english-to-go.com/>

Presents free weekly reading lessons based on a Reuters newspaper article, complete with exercises, but one must subscribe to get access to archived materials and other resources. An individual can get a six month subscription to the English To Go Library of Instant Lessons for US $20. Institutional rates are available.

## A Small Selection of Newspapers

It is impossible to even begin a comprehensive search of on-line newspapers, much less a description of the best ones. In this list, we have tried to list a few sites that 1) present concise article summaries, which are a help those searching for material and also help readers prepare for reading the full article, 2) are easy to navigate, and 3) have free, searchable archives (the more comprehensive, the better). Because of space limitations, we describe only two to three newspapers from Great Britain, the United States, and Australia, but encourage readers to send in their own site descriptions for on-line English newspapers in other nations. Multiple sites are listed not only because variety itself is good, but because the way stories are reported is often different from paper to paper and country to country. Reading articles on the same topic but from different sources is a useful way to encourage critical thinking.

### AUSTRALIA

**Sydney Morning Herald**
<http://www.smh.com.au/>

This paper carries a full range of international and national news with short summaries of stories with links to full reports and related stories. You must go to the end of a long page to find the archives link. At <http://www.smh.com.au/cgi-bin/archive.cgi> you can search a one-month archive of stories for free and three months' worth of articles for a fee.

**The Age**
<http://www.theage.com.au/news/html>

Similar in format and content to Sydney Morning Herald, with short summaries linked to full reports and an archive of four weeks worth of stories. The homepage <http://www.theage.com.au/> focuses exclusively on Australian news, but the link above presents headlines and links to a full range of international, national, and local news. Free archives are available for the last 30 days worth of articles; fees are charged to view older articles.

### Great Britain

**The Times**
<http://www.the-times.co.uk/>

The homepage of this well-known newspaper carries brief, linked summaries of the head stories of the different sections of the paper for that day. Worth noting is searchable archive of news articles dating back to October, 1999. The "Index" button takes you to a page of linked headlines. The search button takes you to a search engine page that is rather sparse. It appears that archives only date back to 1 January, 2000. Search results provide the first paragraph of the articles and links to them, and retrieval appears to be free.

**The Guardian**
<http://www.guardian.co.uk>

The Guardian has a well-organized homepage with concise summaries linked to articles that are printer-friendly. There is also a searchable archive <http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive> dating back to September 1, 1998 without any apparent restrictions or registration requirements.

A keyword search produces the first paragraph of articles and a link to the full story.

**Ananova**
<http://www.ananova.com>

This unique inclusion to our list is not a newspaper *per se*, although in many ways it looks like one. It is more a "super news site" presenting the day's top stories from various sources, a page of the days's headlines and links the major newspapers, and a search engine that scans 30-days worth of archived articles of a score of major British newspapers. An interesting part of its content is Ananova, a virtual reality newscaster who "reads" short summaries of headline news stories. Her synthesized speech is not exactly natural, but is close enough to be easily understood. Ananova and the related content are from the Ananova site. It may well be the best site to search for recent UK news.

## U.S.A.

**The Chicago Sun-Times**
<http://www.suntimes.com/index/>

The homepage itself has only a handful of summaries and is mostly just links to sections of the newspaper. The sections themselves (i.e. News, Sports) do have brief summaries linked to articles. At the top of each article page is a button that links you to a "printer friendly" version of the article. The search facility provides a list of the top to articles that match your query, with titles that link to the articles. The articles also have the "printable version" option.

**USA Today**
<http://www.usatoday.com/>

USA Today is generally recognized as having content written at an easier reading level than that of most other national newspapers in the U.S. and, for that reason, may be a good site to visit. Article summaries, however, are relatively long.

**Los Angeles Times**
<http://www.latimes.com>

The site is easily navigated using the links from the homepage and the article summaries found there and on linked pages. Articles tend to be longer and more difficult. The site search facility <http://www.latimes.com/sitemap.htm> searches the articles of the last seven days. The last 14 days of stories are free to registered site members. Archives can be searched for free for 14 days worth of issues. Issues dating back to January 1990 are also archived but cost $2.00 each to be retrieved. Anyone wanting to browse the archives (free or otherwise) must register first with the LA Times. The site also has links to a page dedicated to education (see above).

## Links to World Newspapers

The number of sites dedicated to news searches and links is growing. Here are a few worth visiting.

**Cyber Newsstand - World Newspapers**
<http://broadcast-live.com/newspapers/>

The World Newspapers page is part of Broadcast Live Com <http://broadcast-live.com/>, a site with links to all major forms of broadcast media. Australian, Canadian, British, European and American newspapers are currently available "the minute after they are published." Available are:

*British newspapers*: 11 papers
*Australia/New Zealand*: 11 Australian and 2 New Zealand papers
*Canada*: 28 newspapers
*USA*: 16 newspapers and 8 magazines
*Europe*: 24 newspapers (various languages)

**UK Newspapers**
<http://www.ipl.org/cgi-bin/reading/news>

Carries a wide selection of regional and national British newspapers. Pages include newspapers' feature articles.

**Online Newspapers**
<http://www.ipl.org/reading/news/>

Lists online versions of print-based newspapers. In addition to traditional local and national newspapers, it also lists official and student run newspapers from all levels of schools.

## Other

**The Ultimate Collection of Newspapers**
<http://pppp.net/links/news/>

**The Internet Public Library**
<http://www.ipl.org/>

**PL Collections** <http://www.ipl.org/col/>

*A History of Reading*. Alberto Manguel. New York: Viking, 1996. Pp. (unavailable) & 372. ISBN 0-6708-4302-4

This book puts me strongly in mind of Chateaubriand and his hauntingly entitled *Memoires d'outre-tomb*, for of all the attempts in this genre, Manguel has written the masterpiece in literary autobiography. His book is an argosy of wonders where we can safely trust ourselves to exotic ports-of-call speaking in many obscure tongues. We embark from Mesopotamia in 4000 BCE and after touching many points on the globe, we come ashore again at the Library of Congress in 1996. (See the timeline at the back endpaper.)

To put metaphor reluctantly aside, we note that the title claims to be a history, not the history. With this modest disclaimer, Manguel invites us on an extraordinarily learned cultural tour unimpeded by any narrow scholarly program. His discourse is not the list of necessary points to be covered expected of the exasperated epigone who wants to finish his spiel uninterrupted. To further slow and enrich the reading, the book provides many illustrations to show how reading has been a midwife to civilization since time out of mind, memoires d'outre-womb. We see the artwork of the ages giving us a view into domestic interiors where the book is more frequent than lapdogs and angels, even an intimate glimpse of a nude Mary Magdalen poring over a tome on her pillow — perhaps in preparation for impending repentance.

Manguel also supplies ample notes, a list of plates, a bibliography, and many thematic quotations. Rest assured, this is a scholarly book...in the spirit of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*...with more learning and lore about books than one would ever have thought possible. But it is not a hobbyhorse like Northrup Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and Frances Yate's *Art of Memory*. It has no dogmatic, didactic point meant to set the world aright. It is indeed the intellectual autobiography of a reader's love affair with reading. Broadly chronological in plan, it weaves Manguel's life among books like primroses along a fence: how the books came into his hands, his continuously varied reaction to them, his gradually dawning realization that books and language and humans (not grimacing primates) came into being together like one of Teilhard de Chardin's cusping points.

If the book has more of a plan than a short review can convey — and it surely does — readers will work it out to suit themselves. As a humorous warning, the first section of the book, about 25 pages, is called "The Last Page," one short chapter to frame Manguel's whimsical purpose, complemented by a concluding last one-chapter section of equal brevity, "Endpaper Pages." After a moment's thought, if one has caught Manguel's quirky spirit, one remembers that endpapers have no text, so Manguel can hint that we should turn back to the "The Last Page," as it truly is, because it is what we read when we start re-reading.

The mass of the book, some 250 pages, divides into two sections, "Acts of Reading" and "Powers of the Reader," each half given ten chapters, with "Acts of Reading" the subjective confessions of an intensely self-conscious reader, and with "Powers of Reading" a platform for more public and social (one might even say socialistic) pronouncements on the role of books in public affairs. Without following any transparently discernible plan, the chapters echo or complement one another across the divide — "The Silent Reader" ("Acts") over against "The Symbolic Reader" ("Powers"); "Learning to Read" ("Acts") against "Forbidden Reading" ("Powers").

Instead of lining up these balanced chapters like boxers on a fight card, Manguel balances the parts of his book against the weight of its whole. Looking like a stork's nest ready to fall to pieces in the next high wind, the book, like the nest, endures through the years. I think part of the durability of the book owes its integrity to the early works of Carlyle, and Carlyle's ideas date back to Hegel. Notice the immanently pre-emptive Hegelian use of the terms "acts" and "powers," a dualistic dialectic that gives us new insights into the developing psyche. The constant fight between opposites, between

empirical logic and the transcendental personality stirs up intellectual unrest and awakens the desire for intelligent argument. The tone and method of *A History of Reading* strongly recall Carlyle's essay "Characteristics" and his French Revolution, which throw down the gauntlet to the powers that always be and always wish to exploit and sunder the weak. The balanced, wing-like progression is also very pronounced in Past and Present. Through all of its shifting and many-shaded veils, *A History of Reading* is a lucent lady whose form can be dimly seen behind the shadow-shifting.

"Oh, very well," you might pout, "but why has a book like this come to be reviewed in the pages of *Literacy Across Cultures*?" One answer I might give is that the book is a testament of faith in the power of words to make big social changes. It also has a psychological appeal to amateur readers who want to improve their status by developing and using critical thinking. The book is far too large and recondite to be used in the classroom and banged about in a backpack, but I think the book should become a teacher's Bible, read every day and the source of ever-evolving lesson plans. The teacher could exploit the chapters on "Learning to Read" and on "Forbidden Reading"; on "Picture Reading" and on "Private Reading" and "Reading within Walls." A History of Reading makes infinite suggestions about the conundrums in reading and writing, how we learn and how we build on what continuous freewriting teaches us about ourselves. All of those freshman composition handbooks, with their answer-provided quizzes, their tear-out sheet writing exercises, their banal theme suggestions, and their use of cartoons—these are a horde of monkeys to this book, the true gem that Shylock would not have given for a wilderness of monkeys.

*Reviewed by John Lindberg*
*Literacy Volunteers of Tucson, AZ, USA*

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*Conversations of the mind: The uses of jounal writing for second language learners*. Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998. Pp. xiv & 215. ISBN 0-8058-2318-2

In her closing remarks, Rebecca Mlynarczyk quotes from an anonymous email list posting which raised a fundamental question about the value of educational research: does it help practitioners, does it solve problems? The question is particularly acute when posed for the qualitative researcher. What, for example, can we learn from a case study? Does it reveal anything about reality beyond the particular situation in which it was carried out (pp. 176-177)? This volume is an elegant and persuasive answer to these questions.

For those who need one, it is a powerful argument for the value of qualitative research. Mlynarczyk has constructed a well-reasoned and balanced evaluation of the uses and limitations of journal writing in second language learning. Around the case studies of five ESL student writers, and of herself as a life-long developing teacher, she builds, in Eisner's words, her "own interpretive universe (p. 177)." Taking the words and experiences of these students, as they grapple with what it means to write in a foreign language and to come to be able to participate in a foreign culture, she fills in the background to show her readers how we might interpret their experiences in the light of writing and language learning theory.

One of the strengths of the book is found in the second chapter in which Mlynarczyk reviews the field and explicates the notion of 'connected knowing' (pp. 26-30), showing how it underpins her rationale for reflective journal writing. Connected knowing, here described, is a rational alternative to the scientific objectivism that still dominates the way we think about and analyze most classrooms. (The scientific objectivist inheritance still accounts for a large part of professional academic discourse in both the West as well as Japan.) Connected knowing emphasizes personal meaning making and expression. It is the kind of knowing that recognises the presence of the knower in any kind of knowledge, and that validates personal meaning making as an inescapable part of learning. For Mlynarczyk this is precisely what happens in journal writing.

Another strength of this book is that — though there is no doubting Mlynarczyk's advocacy of journal writing as a way of learning and of articulating thoughts — she resists the temptation to showcase only the glossy side: those students who take to it with ease. Instead, two of the five case studies are of

students who have feelings quite different from the author's about journal writing. One is a reluctant student writer who, Mlynarczyk eventually realises, is able to reflect personally. However, the student is unwilling to make public her private life, even in the limited sense of a journal shared only with her teacher. The other is a student, who, in the teacher's eyes, was an exemplary journal writer, but who herself felt it was unimportant. These are issues about journal writing that it is perhaps most important to reflect on at this stage, rather than simply describing how journals can help some students.

The sense of balance that is typical of the book also results in an intriguing concluding chapter in which the writer shows the limitations of some overly simplistic assumptions often made by writing teachers. These include: Personal writing isn't necessarily easier for women than men; native culture doesn't always determine how students respond to texts; freewriting is not necessarily the best technique for all students; and, despite the importance of connected knowing in Mlynarczyk's epistemology, journal writing may not necessarily elicit it from all students. The key to appreciating the book fully lies in this final section. The boundary between an enthusiastic teacher trying to lead her students in a particular direction, and at the same time describing that direction as "finding your own way" presents a dilemma. Mlynarczyk's answer to this dilemma is reflected in her answer to the questions that open this review. Perhaps neither we as readers, nor Mlynarczyk's students as writers, may find solutions to problems here; but our "sensitivity to and appreciation for the unexpected situations that occur in teaching" (p. 177) (or writing, studying, getting used to a new culture) may be heightened. It's a book that is well worth reading.

*Reviewed by Michael Carroll*
*Kyoto University of Education*

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## News and Announcements

### CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Richard R. Day and Julian Bamford seek contributions for their new book, *Extensive Reading Activities*. It is intended for teachers of any foreign language and for any foreign language classroom, regardless of the specific focus of instruction (e.g., speaking, reading, writing). We would like activities that have as their focus extensive reading from teachers who have used them in their own classrooms. If you would like to submit an activity for consideration, please follow the instructions below. Any royalties will be used to promote extensive reading.

A *special* deadline for the submissions of contributions by LAC readers is **July 25, 2000**.

Contributions can be submitted to either editor, Day or Bamford, by email (rday@hawaii.edu or bamford@ shonan.bunkyo.ac.jp) or regular mail. If you use email, send as an attachment. If you use regular mail, please put the activity on a floppy (Word for Windows 95 for Day; MacIntosh for Bamford). Please feel free to contact us for more information.


| | |
|---|---|
| Richard R. Day | Julian Bamford |
| Dept. of ESL | Bunkyo University |
| University of Hawaii | 1100 Namegaya |
| 1890 East West Road | Chigasaki-shi |
| Honolulu, Hawaii | Kanagawa-ken |
| 96822 | 253-8550 |
| USA | JAPAN |


#### INSTRUCTIONS

Try to fit your activity into this format. However, if your activity does not work with this format, submit it in a format that makes sense for other teachers.

Title:
Category: **(Placement, Orientation, In-Class, Out-of-Class, Library & Materials, After-Reading. or Evaluation)**
Contributed by: **(name and affiliation)**
Level:
Aims:
Teacher's Preparation Time:
Students' Preparation Time:
Class Time:
Resources & Materials Needed:

Procedure
Teacher's Voice: **(Why are you enthusiastic about this activity? What have been your students' reactions? Are there any alternative procedures? Is there anything you would like to tell other teachers about using the activity?)**
References **(only if needed)**
Sample: **(If your activity makes use of a photocopiable form, add it here. Also, if an actual example of the activity would be helpful, add it here.)**

## Examples of Activities

Title: **Rate It!**
Category: **Library**
Contributed by: **Julian Bamford, Bunkyo University, Japan**
Level: **Any**
Aims: **To give students a quick and easy way to rate books that helps other students choose books to read**
Teacher's Preparation Time: **after initial organization, none**
Students' Preparation Time: **none**
Resources: **glue or paste; copies of form (see Sample)**
Procedure: **Paste a copy of the form into the front of each book. Tell students that when they finish reading a book, they should write a number rating, a brief comment and (optional) their name on the form.**

**When students are looking for a book to read, the 'Rate It!' form in each book gives students one more bit of information, the opinion of their peers, in addition to the title, the cover illustration and the blurb that describes the book on the back cover.**

**In addition, every so often, the 'Rate It!' forms can be checked by teachers. Books with consistently low ratings (1, 2 or 3) can be withdrawn from the library.**

Julian writes: **"*'Rate It!' forms are an essential part of our extensive reading library. Choosing a book is usually a solitary activity, but 'Rate It!' forms give students immediate access to their peers' opinions: a list of 4s and 5s on the form is a good indication that they, too, will enjoy the book. 1s, 2s and 3s give the opposite message.***

***What happens when a form gets filled up? You might want to write a message at the bottom of the form before you duplicate it, such as: NO MORE SPACE? STICK IN A NEW FORM or NO MORE SPACE? ASK THE LIBRARIAN TO STICK IN A NEW FORM according to how your library operates.***

***I stick the 'Rate It!' forms in the books using a thin line of glue along the top only. Thus, when a second form is added on top of a full one (again with a thin line of glue) students can easily flip up the new form to see the ratings and comments written on the form(s) below.***

***I've only had a problem with one book: Love or Money, a popular detective story in the Oxford Bookworms series. Someone gave the book a 5 and commented on being surprised to learn who the killer was. Unfortunately, the student named the killer! So now that book has "Don't write the name of the killer" in red at the top of the form!***

***In the back of one of my file drawers is a sad pile of books that got too many 'Rate it!' 3s or below. I want above average books in the library because I want students to have as many wonderful reading experiences as possible. 'Rate It!' forms are what make it possible for me to find and withdraw under-performing books."***

Sample:
RATE IT!
**Rate the book with these numbers: 5 = great; 4 = good; 3 = OK; 2 = poor; 1 = terrible.**
**Rating Comment and Name**

Title: **Poetry With Character**
Category: **In-Class**
Contributed by: **Richard R. Day, University of Hawaii, USA**
Level: **Any**
Aims: **vocabulary development and enrichment; insights into character development**
Teacher's Preparation Time: **none**
Students' Preparation Time: **varies with proficiency of students**
Class Time: **depends on number of students performing**
Resources: **Materials students are reading or have read**
Procedure
**1. When students finish a reading (e.g., a novel, short story, poem), ask them to write a five-line poem about one of the characters.**

**2. The student writes the name of the character on the first and fifth lines.**

**3. On the second, third, and fourth lines, the student writes a two-word phrase that describes the character.**

**4. Have the student read the finished poem to the class.**

Richard writes: ***"Getting students to write about characters in the materials they read may be problematic. Students often find the exercise deadly dull; teachers may not enjoy reading what their students have been forced to come up with. This activity can lighten the load, and make writing about characters an interesting and insightful process for both student and teacher. Teachers are often reluctant to use poetry in their classes. However, I have found that an activity that is short and limited often meets with success. My students take great pleasure in reading their completed poems in class. A clever poem often motivates other students to read the book to learn more about the character.***

***Teachers might want to model the activity before assigning it, especially with beginning students. It might also be helpful to brain-storm with the class about words that could fit into a poem. Some students like to use their dictionaries.***

***I adapted this activity from Bassnett and Grundy (1993, p. 12), Meeting Poem."***

References

**Bassnett, S. & Grundy, P. (1993).** ***Language through literature.*** **Essex: Longman.**

**Prowse, P. (1999).** ***Help!*** **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

Sample:

This poem is based on the main character in Help (Prowse, 1999). *Help*, a level 1 book in the Cambridge English Readers series, tells the story of Frank Wormold, a struggling writer. He sleeps a lot and just can't seem to get going. But one morning, he gets a letter from a movie company that wants to make a movie of one of his stories. Here is one possible poem:

| | |
|---|---|
| Frank Wormold | Frank Wormold |
| _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ | Frequently weary |
| _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ | Feeling weak |
| _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ | Film writer |
| Frank Wormold | Frank Wormold |

## Submissions

*Literacy Across Cultures*, welcomes submissions in English on topics related to reading and writing and their social product, literacy. We invite any interested person to submit:

- articles (up to 3000 words, not too heavily referenced)
- perspective/opinion pieces
- book and article reviews
- responses to *LAC* articles
- descriptions/reviews of literacy-related World Wide Web sites and materials
- classroom and teaching tips

for upcoming issues. In addition, we welcome annotated bibliographies and other collections of information on topics related to literacy, both for *LAC* and for our WWW site.

*Literacy Across Cultures* is published twice a year, in Spring/Summer anf Fall/Winter issues. Submissions for the Spring/Summer issue should be received by the 20th of March, and for the Fall/Winter issue by the 20th of August. We encourage relevant submissions that may not fit into any of the categories above.

Submissions can be made in three ways:

1) As attachments to an e-mail message to the editor. The text should be provided twice, once in a Text file (.TXT) format and once in a Rich Text Format (.RTF). The e-mail message should include a message to the editor explaining the content of the submission and a short personal biography to accompany the submission if accepted. The message should include information about what computer OS was used (Mac or IBM) and what word processor was used, including the version number of that software. If possible, an additional version saved in a Word Perfect format (ver. 5.2 to 7.0) is appreciated. It should be sent to David Dycus, the *LAC* editor, at <dcdycus@ japan-net.ne.jp>, with a copy (CC) sent to <dcdycus@ asu.aasa.ac.jp>.

2) On a 1.44 mb floppy disk accompanied by a printed version of the submission. The text on the floppy disk must be provided in 2 formats, once in a Text file (.TXT) format and once in a Rich Text Format (.RTF). If possible, a version saved in a

Word Perfect format (version 5.2 to 7.0) is appreciated.

3) If the author does not have access to a computer, two typed, double-spaced copies of the text and any accompanying tables, graphics, etc. can be sent to the address below.

**Contact information,** which will accompany any published submission, should also be included.

**If the document includes graphics, tables, drawings, etc.,** they should be saved as separate files on the floppy disk or sent as separate e-mail attachments, in one of these formats: .JPG, .BMP, .GIF, .PCX, or .WPG. A printed copy of any graphics must also be included.

Printed submissions should be sent to:
David Dycus
Aichi Shukutoku University
9 Katahira, Nagakute, Nagakute-cho, Aichi-gun, Aichi-ken 480-11 JAPAN.
FAX at 0568-85-2560 (outside of Japan, that is 81-568-85-2560). (Please do not fax submissions.)

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